OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

EXTRA! EXTRA!

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

SOMETHING SINISTAR!

HOW WILLIAMS ELECTRONICS CREATED ITS SCARY MASTERPIECE



ALSO INSIDE!

ACORN ARCHIMEDES | BATTLETOADS
ATARI 8-BIT | GALAGA 88 | TEKKEN
TRANSLATION KINGS | RYGAR

PAPERBOY DELIVERS FOR 30 YEARS!



READ ALL ABOUT IT!

THE BIG SCOOP ON ATARI'S ARCADE CLASSIC

BLAHBLA BLAH BL





MISSING TOEJAM & EARL GAME FOUND!

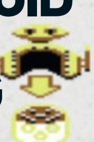
WHERE DOES THE DREAMCAST TITLE FIT INTO THE TRILOGY?

10 MAGIC MOVIE LICENCES!

IF YOU PLAY ANY FILM TIE-INS THIS YEAR, MAKE IT THESE ONES



THIS IS THE PARADROID YOU'RE LOOKING FOR!



BRAYBROOK REVISITS HIS HIT STRATEGIC SHOOT-'EM-UP

PUTTY SQUAD FINALLY HERE!

LOST AMIGA CLASSIC GETS RESURRECTED AFTER 19 YEARS

ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 125

THE RETROBATES

BEST FILM LICENCES



DARRAN JONES

Probably *Aliens* on the CPC for me. It's an atmospheric experience, with some truly scary alien encounters.
Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
Lords Of Waterdeep
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



NICHOLAS THORPE

The Jungle Book on the Master System. I was given it for my seventh birthday, and I'll always have fond memories of jumping around to *The Bare Necessities*.
Expertise:
Owning seven Master Systems
Currently playing:
Valkyria Chronicles II
Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



PAUL DRURY

There was something magical about playing *Tron*, imagining you were in Flynn's Arcade, showboating your skills on that futuristic cabinet, basking in that strange blue glow…
Expertise:
Digital torture chambers
Currently playing:
Sinistar
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



STEVE HOLMES

GoldenEye 007. It was a game-changer in so many ways and re-hashed the FPS template forever. Protecting Natalya during the Control level is still a bastard.
Expertise:
Impersonating Liquid Snake
Currently playing:
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker
Favourite game of all time:
The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time



JONATHAN WELLS

Has to be *Aladdin*, great animation/levels and still stands up today as a really good platform game.
Expertise:
Tackling dirty nappies and retro spreads
Currently playing:
Assassin's Creed IV: BlackFlag
Favourite game of all time:
The Secret Of Monkey Island



DAVID CROOKES

RoboCop. I had an amazing time playing *RoboCop 2* on the GX4000 console. It was just about the best game on it and well worth the asking price.
Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy* and Atari Lynx
Currently playing:
Tomb Raider original on iOS
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



ANDREW FISHER

The Untouchables (C64 version). Detailed period graphics and an amazing soundtrack give a real flavour of the film.
Expertise:
30 years of gaming
Currently playing:
Delta
Favourite game of all time:
Paradroid



PAUL DAVIES

Alien 3, it was a really hardcore game that looked amazing for its time.
Expertise:
Banging my head against a brick wall
Currently playing:
Grand Theft Auto V
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



JASON KELK

It's an oldie, but *Ghostbusters* kept me amused for hours!
Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero
Currently playing:
Psyvariar
Favourite game of all time:
Io

LOADING...



Doesn't time fly? Retro Gamer is now an amazing ten years old, making it something of a retro gem itself. When the magazine began in 2004 under the editorial leadership of Martyn Carroll at Live Publishing, it set a standard for creating interesting articles and fascinating topics that made it feel refreshingly new when compared to its peers.

I like to think that we've not only run with that winning formula, but managed to improve on it, delivering awesome exclusives and superb insight into our favourite pastime. I'm convinced **Retro Gamer** will still be around in another ten years' time, so our aim is to continue to improve it and make it the best magazine it can possibly be. You do that by delivering great content and fun covers, like this month's *Paperboy* offering.

Otherwise it's business as usual, so this issue Andrew Braybrook gives a detailed account on the creation of *Paradroid*, we speak to Phill Boag-Butcher, who was responsible for resurrecting *Putty Squad*, and chat to Howell Ivy about his incredible arcade career.

We're also celebrating a big anniversary this month as Atari's classic *Paperboy* turns 30. John Salwitz revisits his classic Atari coin-op, and we also manage to quiz Al Baker about his impressive Lynx conversion.

Here's to another ten years of everyone's favourite retro magazine.





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>> **Load 125** Breathing new life into classic games

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FEATURED



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RETRO REVIVALS

PAPERBOY



In the hot seat this month…





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"Beautiful, and one of the best RPGs of its generation"

Luke Albigés



76 Future Classic

Why Xenoblade Chronicles will change your opinion on JRPGs forever



32 Putty Squad

Discover how a 19-year-old Amiga gem finally saw the light of day



60 10 movie masterpieces

It's awards season, so we give out our own to a selection of must-play games



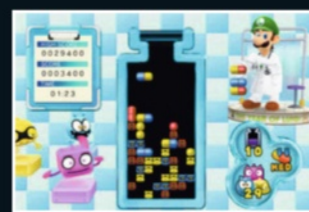
54 The Story Of Toejam & Earl

As the lost Dreamcast game resurfaces, we look back at the trilogy

ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED









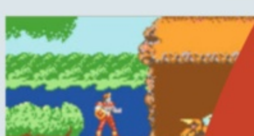


retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL

18 RYGAR

Retro Gamer reader Stephen Westwood explains why he's suddenly fallen in love with the Atari Lynx version that he just discovered online.







Get online now!

Visit the **Retro Gamer** website and upload your very own classic profiles



www.retrogamer.net

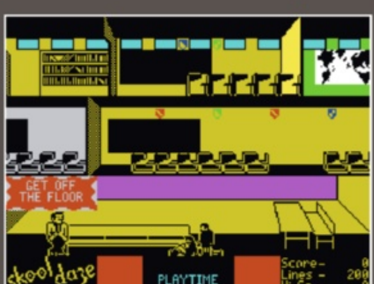
retro radar

GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD

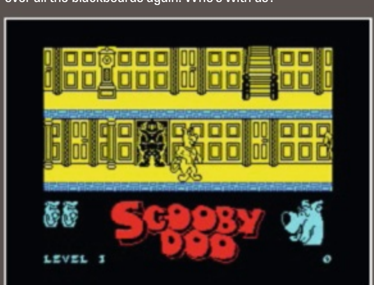


>> Kickstarters continue to be a massive way of injecting life into retro projects. The latest is a brand new Bluetooth-enabled Spectrum from Elite. Will it make its target? You'll need to head on over to its website to find out...

CONTENTS



» [Spectrum] We can't wait to start writing rude words over all the blackboards again. Who's with us?



» [Spectrum] Using a keyboard should make punching ghosts in *Scooby Doo* even easier now.



RUBBER-KEYED REVIVAL

RETRO GAMER QUIZZES ELITE SYSTEMS ON ITS BLUETOOTH ZX SPECTRUM

Over the last couple of years, Kickstarter has proven to be a fantastic resource for retro gaming, for both developers and gamers. Sequels to retro favourites such as *Elite* and *Broken Sword* have been funded through the site, with the inherent risk in reviving older series mitigated by an audience willing to fund development. But while retro software projects are common on Kickstarter, hardware is a largely untouched area. Venturing into this uncharted territory is Elite Systems, which is currently seeking to fund the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum. **Retro Gamer** spoke to Steve Wilcox to find out more.

Why are you using Kickstarter? Is this not something Elite could fund?

Our response is in two parts. The first part relates to risk. The demand for the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum, if any, was unquantified and we felt unquantifiable. Added to this, the cost to make even a single unit from production tooling was significant – well in excess of £100,000 when all's considered. The second part relates to community. Kickstarter brings not only a mechanism for assessing demand and for defraying risk but also for sharing and receiving ideas – instantly. This is an incredibly useful tool for developers and marketeers of any product. Even the largest businesses with the deepest pockets and ready access to reams of data and large focus groups can spend a great deal of time, effort and money developing products to an advanced stage before they discover they've gone down a blind alley. Kickstarter's community will tell you that in a heartbeat.

Who is actually making the machine? Is it in-house at Elite?

The device is not made in-house. It's designed and developed in the UK, and manufactured in China. The device's software was developed to Elite's brief by some very smart third-party developers. The device's firmware was developed collectively by the third-party developers, our UK manufacturing partners and the Chinese manufacturers. Whilst we wish it wasn't so, the first 1,000 units of the device will be manufactured in China. However, it's heart and soul will be British.

What has been the most difficult thing about creating this device?
Asking the right questions. When the product was first mooted 30 or more months ago, we began talking to a dozen prospective design, development and manufacturing partners, both here and outside of the UK. We realised that we didn't know what we were asking for help with and so they couldn't tell us what help they could offer. After some months of talking, and wasting a lot of people's time, we put the project in the 'too difficult' tray and it stayed there for 18 months. Only after Kickstarter launched in the UK and even then, only after one of the groups we'd talked to previously sent us an off-topic email, did we actually look again at the project – that was early last spring.

How is Rick Dickinson involved with the project?
Rick came on board just last month. So far his involvement has been in fronting the launch. He's a talented, highly skilled designer with a wealth of experience to bring to the process of realising our vision for the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum. We anticipate he'll be more closely involved in pre-production and production phases, assuming our Kickstarter appeal is a success.

Why make it initially compatible with iOS?
In a word, resource. The recreation of the Sinclair ZX Spectrum as the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum is being worked on by a tiny team, none of whom – to date at least – have been able to work full-time on the project. That may change, depending upon the outcome of our Kickstarter appeal. We already have a significant range of (ZX Spectrum and other) apps for iOS devices. Currently, we have a much smaller range of apps for Android and other devices and there is the added complication with Android of a lack of homogeneity across devices. Given all of this it was natural, in the first instance, to target the development of the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum as a controller for iOS devices and apps. However we've already announced our intention to make it a controller for selected Android devices and apps too. The take up, as evidenced by the pledges for the Android rewards at our Kickstarter appeal, has been good since we made that announcement.

> "We anticipate there being at least 100 apps and games available at launch"
> Steve Wilcox

What apps will the device be compatible with?
By default the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum will be compatible with the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum apps available from secure App Store environments. At launch this will be the iTunes App Store and Google Play. We anticipate there being at least 100 apps and games available at launch. Optionally the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum will be a Bluetooth keyboard for most phones and tablets as well as for Macs and PCs. This optional functionality is for other apps and for the programs you use every day, making it possible to type a letter, send an email or play a game on your PC/Mac with the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum. Note: compatibility with third-party programs is not guaranteed. However, we'll be urging the sharing of our Technical Overview of the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum with the developers of third-party apps and programs, to encourage compatibility.

Why do you think there's still so much love for the ZX Spectrum in the industry?
I think that this was best 'explained' by Rick Dickinson, the designer of the Sinclair ZX Spectrum when recording the appeal video for our Kickstarter. He said (I'm paraphrasing slightly) '…we didn't want the ZX Spectrum to look like everybody else's computer, which were just keyboards. It shouldn't look like a computer, it should look like a product … there's a heart and soul in there.'


» As we were going to press, Elite revealed this cool Spectrum signed by Matt Smith.

THE RETRO DEBATE

» From the forum: Readers react to the Bluetooth ZX Spectrum

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

"I have some of the Elite Spectrum games on my iPhone, but for it to be a viable purchase at the planned price it needs to be usable as a general purpose keyboard for my Android tablet too. If it's locked down to prevent other use, then I'm out" Antiriad2097

"Think things like this should be embraced; the price isn't super crazy high and in the year 2014 to get a Speccy Bluetooth keyboard will be very cool" psj3809

"Elite were promising this a couple of years ago, things went quiet and now the Kickstarter emerges. I won't be buying it, it feels like an expensive novelty" Merman

Left on the drawing board

» Blueprints that prove the **Retro Gamer** staff should stick to magazines…



Lightgun
With *Time Crisis* and the *House Of The Dead* games on iOS, this would be the perfect addition to any mobile gamer's bag. Pulling it out in public would be an easy way to meet people, assuming that the people you want to meet are angry police officers.



Jaguar controller
Atari's Jaguar controller was often criticised for its telephone-style keypad. Why not make a version you can actually dial a phone with? With 17 buttons, the Jaguar controller could be the perfect antidote to the era of simplicity in mobile gaming.



Power Glove
The scenario of your dreams has finally come true. In one hand, you have an iPad. The other hand is nestled in a Power Glove. Your fellow train passengers might look like they're judging you, but deep down they're jealous.



Bluetooth N-Gage handset
We're convinced that there's an N-Gage nostalgia market out there, still singing the praises of the *Pathway To Glory* games. If only a manufacturer would cater to it by recognising the joy of side-talking…

Amazing titles on greatdigitalmags.com

All About History



The latest issue of **All About History** takes an in-depth look at the army of Alexander the Great and asks just how he was able to conquer much of the known world. In another eclectic issue we also have features on the Titanic, Robin Hood and the ten dirtiest tricks of WWII.

games™



games™ 144 celebrates the darkness with the return of *Thief* after a ten-year absence, as well as a new entry to the *Alien* franchise after the abominable *Colonial Marines*. Elsewhere, Tim Schafer talks adventures, Team Meat talks cats and Bethesda's old boys recall the making of *Elder Scrolls: Arena*.

X-ONE



X-ONE 107 brings you the future of the Xbox One as we talk exclusively to *Titanfall* developer Respawn Entertainment, highlight the most important games coming in 2014, show you how the Xbox One will evolve and highlight some of the best games still to arrive on Xbox 360. We've got every angle covered.

Play



This month, **Play** secured the exclusive review of *Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII*. Can it live up to its own lofty standards? Find out here first. Elsewhere, we round up the killer exclusives coming to PS4, reveal some tips and tricks for the new console and explain why 4K simply doesn't matter.

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INTERNET ARCHIVE LAUNCHES RETRO SERVICE

PLAY CLASSIC GAMES ONLINE

The Internet Archive has launched a retro gaming collection called Console Living Room, allowing gamers from around the world to play hundreds of classic games from their web browsers through a version of the MESS emulator. The non-profit organisation already hosted a collection of classic PC games, in addition to its video, audio and website archives. The service launched with an initial selection of five American consoles: the Atari 2600, Atari 7800, ColecoVision, Bally Astrocade and Magnavox Odyssey 2. It has since added its first Japanese machine – Sega's oft-forgotten debut console, the SG-1000.

As well as including playable versions of the games the project offers information on each release, collaborating with sites such as Sega Retro to source high quality information. The project is also seeking to highlight the best games on each system featured, in order to enable users to enjoy the best of each emulated system.

The emulation offered doesn't currently match up to dedicated programs – there's no sound available for any system at present, and though it offers gamepad support it didn't recognise any of the pads we tried with it. Additionally, some consoles have more complete libraries on offer than others. The Atari 2600 has a large number of games available, whereas the ColecoVision is missing noteworthy releases such as *Donkey Kong* and *Zaxxon*. However, the Internet Archive is regularly adding new games and plans to improve the emulation whenever possible, so it's worth returning to the site at regular intervals to see what's new.

To take advantage of the games on offer, you'll need a web browser with Javascript enabled. If you feel like sneaking a quick game of *Lode Runner* at work, head to archive.org/details/consolelivingroom.



»We're always pleased to see access to retro games increased, particularly when Ninja Golf is involved.



For many Western *Sonic* fans, Greg Martin's artwork is as iconic as Naoto Oshima's character designs.

GREG MARTIN PASSES AWAY

Greg Martin, a prolific artist who illustrated a number of videogame covers, passed away in January. Greg's career began at Hanna-Barbera, where he was an animator for shows such as *Scooby-Doo* and *The Smurfs*, as well as colleague Seth MacFarlane's *Larry & Steve*, an animated short which provided the early basis for *Family Guy*. During the Nineties, he produced art for a number of classic games, including *Pac-Man*, *Bomberman* and *Bonk*. Most memorably, he provided the artwork used for many of the early *Sonic The Hedgehog* games in the West. Our thoughts go out to Greg's family and friends.

RETROCOLLECT ANNOUNCES NEW VIDEOGAME MARKET

Retro gaming website RetroCollect has recently announced an exciting videogame market that will take place next month. Taking place at Leeds Town Hall on Saturday 15 March from 10:00am – 4:00pm, the event is to be the first dedicated gaming market in the UK. The event is expected to host over 30 traders, selling games from all eras as well as merchandise, collectibles and more, making it perfect for those looking to enhance their collections. Visitors are being encouraged to bring their own spare items for trade and sale to make the most of the day. Visit the official website at **events.retrocollect.com** for more information.



INTRODUCING RETRO GAMER 2.0

YOUR GUIDE TO OUR EXCITING NEW WEBSITE

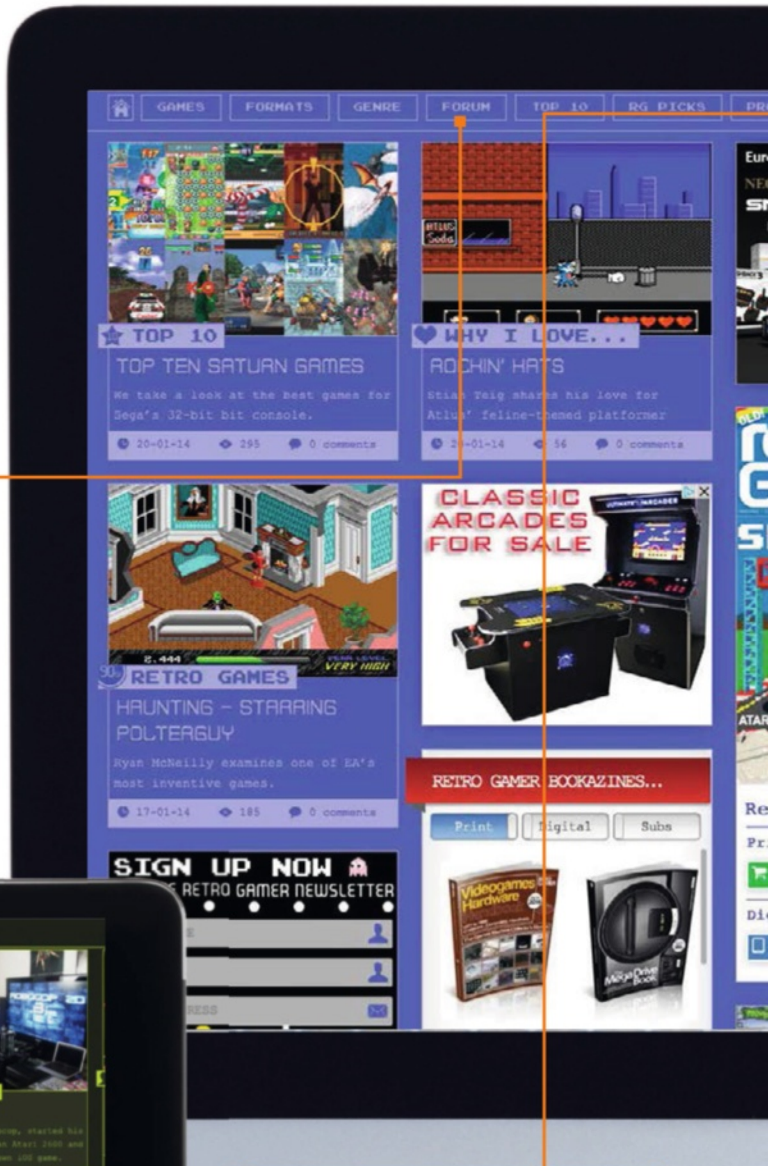
We're proud of the community we have at Retro Gamer, so we wanted to update our website in order to reflect that fact. We've worked hard behind the scenes to deliver a fantastic new website that offers far more ways to interact with us than ever before and we're confident that you're going to love it as much as we do. If you love writing or discussing games, then the **Retro Gamer** website is the perfect place to do it, allowing easy access to our forum and thriving social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. And who knows, you might even end up one of the many games profile related prizes we'll be giving away in the coming months.

So without further ado, let's go through the new-look website and highlight all the cool features that make **www.retrogamer.net** so great.



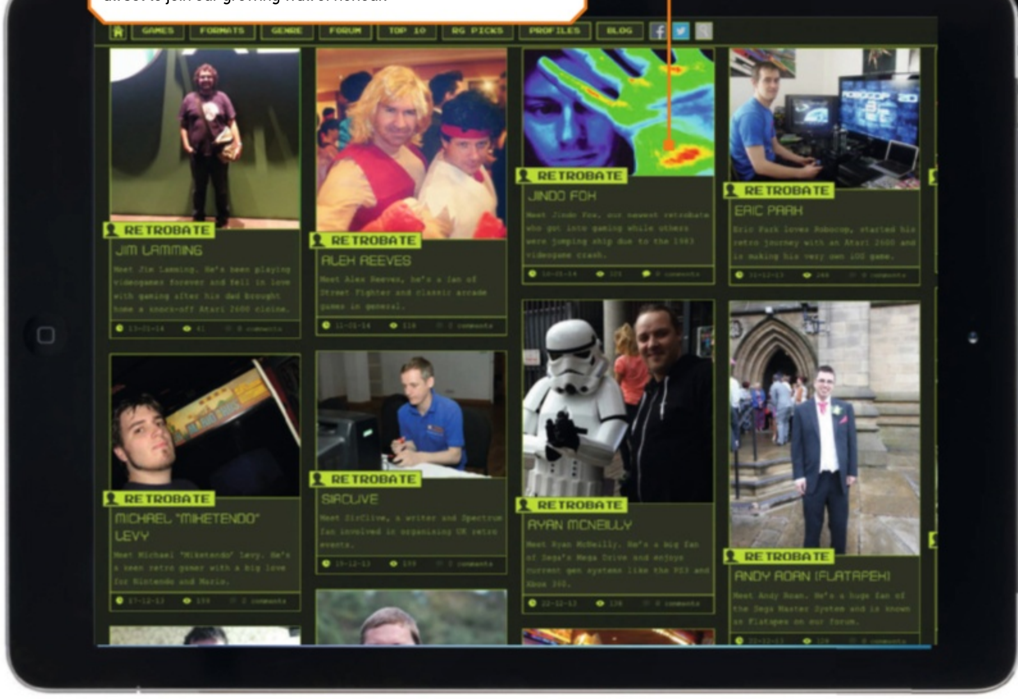
FORUM

■ We're really pleased with our popular forum and try to hang out on there whenever we can. If you want to talk to us about the magazine's content, our favourite games or anything else then this is the place to find us. There's plenty of readers on there, so why not visit and make some new friends?



RETROBATES

■ If you love **Retro Gamer** as much as we do then why not join our growing group of Retrobates? It's incredibly easy to do, you simply fill out a short profile of yourself at **www.retrogamer.net/tell-us-about-yourself/?retrobate=1** upload a photo of yourself and you're all set to join our growing wall of honour.



BLOG

■ There's always something happening in the world of retro, whether it's the release of an exciting new Kickstarter project or a brand new arcade opening up somewhere. We regularly update our blog each day with fresh new content, so be sure to keep visiting it each day.





GAME PROFILES

■ This is where you'll be able to browse our massive selection of game profiles. They're divided by different decades and our easy-to-use website makes it a cinch to add your own personal favourites. Want to add one right now? Then head to **www.retrogamer.net/user-submitted-posts** now.

THEMES

■ One of the cool things we love about the new site is the classic themes it has. Want your page to look like a Spectrum, PC or Commodore 64? Simply change the relevant switch and away you go. We'll be adding additional themes in the future.



WHY I LOVE

■ We're well aware that our readers love **Retro Gamer**, but we know that you love other aspects of gaming as well. This is the place to tell us. You might want to talk about your love for the ZX Spectrum, why you think *Rygar* is the greatest arcade game of all time, or simply profess your love for the Cruiser joystick. Whatever it is you love about gaming, we want to hear about it.



JOIN IN

■ Ultimately, the website has been made for you, the reader. It's been designed as a place where you can share your favourite game profiles with everyone, tell us what you love about retro games and allow people to see you and your videogame collection. We'll be looking for feedback so we can keep improving the website, so be sure to tell us about your own opinion at: **www.retrogamer.net/forum**

CLASSIC CONTENT

■ We pride ourselves on our informative and often exclusives articles, and are aware that not all of our readers have been with us from the beginning. As a result we've started putting abridged versions of classic features on the website for you to enjoy. We're currently featuring developer profiles, company profiles, hardware profiles and future classics, and will continue to add more exciting features in the coming months.



COMPATABILITY

■ We're worked hard to ensure that the **Retro Gamer** website works on all sorts of devices. Whether you're a PC or Mac user, likes using Android, or display everything on an iOS device, you'll be able to view the website and join in the fun.

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.

Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Saturday Night at the Console

Conflicted much? Since I'm a bit of an old fart, set in my ways, slow on the uptake these days, any Hollywood crossover seems like an idea baked in hell. But I'm a sucker for hype.

Of course there has been *Star Wars* and *Discs Of Tron*, *RoboCop* and *Rambo*. But with few enough exceptions to become a survival lesson that I hope is now part of my family genes, gaming and movies don't make happy families. Still, like PaRappa always said, 'you gotta believe', and occasionally there's an excuse to throw money at things like *Toy Story* and *The Lord Of The Rings* or um… um… err…

Oh, *Alien 3*! Now that was a genuinely great game on Mega Drive by Probe. It reminded me a little bit of *Spooks And Spiders* for the BBC Micro, giving me an early edge that I was grateful for, but soon realising there was more to this than finding a key to open a door. Same deal with the timing on those ladders though. The animation of Ripley, as YouTube has reminded me, was terrific. The aliens were as creepy as their on-screen counterparts too (wearing 1992 spectacles). It didn't need to be as good as it was, which was the reason we were all so surprised and ultimately hooked.

Oh, *GoldenEye 007* for N64! Right up until Dave Doak, Martin Hollis et al produced this seminal work for Rare/Nintendo, movie tie-ins were just varying degrees of shoddiness in my book. Controversially perhaps even the Death Star run in Atari's 1983 immersive sit-down coin-op. Don't get me wrong, I was enthralled by vector graphics every bit as much as the next kid (in computer class) at school, and would drool over *Vectrex* in Woolworths, just because, well, vector graphics! Sorry but the frickin' X-wing and TIE Fighters looked nothing like that; at the cinema or on my trading cards. So: fail.

GoldenEye 007, on the other hand, has made it nearly impossible for anyone to truly blow people away with a movie-based videogame ever again. You can have good ideas and smart presentation (*Spider-Man 2* for PS2), but N64 *GoldenEye* – along with *Mario 64* – stopped your heart the first time you saw it. And how many college courses were wasted thanks to students glued to split-screen multiplayer mode? Wii remake aside (which compared unfavourably before anyone even bothered to unzip the cellophane), post-*GoldenEye 007* it's like nobody dares to set a new benchmark. I had hopes for Cameron's *Avatar* but now we're creeping dangerously into contemporary land.

Hand on hearts, with everyone being brutally honest, which is always difficult (like realising Black 'n Blue were truly terrible even for hair metal) we always knew that in the Eighties and Nineties you could never recreate movie-magic on a games console. *Alien*/HR Giger-style visuals were perfect for the likes of *R-Type* and *Contra* to adapt for sci-fi scenarios, but anything other than that – with the exception of the metallic sheen seen in *RoboCop* – rather highlighted any hardware limitations.

My fondest memory of computer-game hijacking of Hollywood hype was David Crane's *Ghostbusters* for Commodore 64. The digital speech and soundtrack sounded awesome, so it didn't matter that the action didn't get anywhere near the cinematic experience.

Gave me an edge in *GTA* though…



> "GoldenEye has made it nearly impossible to blow people away with a movie-based game ever again"
> Paul Davies

6 February – 4 March

retrodiary

>> A month of retro events both past and present



6 February 1991
■ Capcom's coin-op *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* punches its way into arcades for the very first time.



7 February 2013
■ *After Burner Climax* is released worldwide on iOS platforms through the App Store.



8 February 2008
■ The disappointing release of *Nitrobike* for the Nintendo Wii arrives in Europe with a whimper.

14 February 1991
■ DMA Design and Psygnosis release *Lemmings* on the Commodore Amiga to great reviews.





20 February 1987
■ Konami releases its new run-and-gun *Contra* into arcades.



17 February 2006
■ LucasArts' real-time strategy game *Star Wars: Empire At War* is released in Europe on PC.



17 February 1999
■ Sid Meier's turn-based strategy game *Alpha Centauri* is released on PC in Europe.



15 February 2008
■ *Cooking Mama 2: Dinner With Friends* serves itself up on the Nintendo DS in Europe.



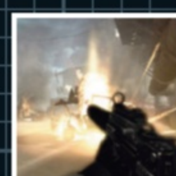
22 February 2002
■ Nintendo's role-playing game *Golden Sun* gets its European release on the Game Boy Advance.



22 February 2008
■ *Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity* is released on the Nintendo Wii.



23 February 1999
■ *Marvel Super Heroes Vs Street Fighter* is released on PlayStation in the US of A.



24 February 2006
■ Criterion Games's first-person shooter *Black* is released on PS2 and Xbox.



28 February 2014
■ *Professor Layton And The Azran Legacy* is to be released in America on the 3DS, exactly a year since its Japanese debut.



28 February 2003
■ It's Pac To The Future with *Pac-Man World 2* newly released on the PS2 in Europe.



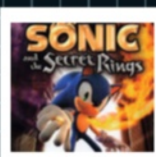
27 February 2009
■ European PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 owners see the release of *Silent Hill: Homecoming* published by Konami.



26 February 2010
■ Sony's excellent interactive action-adventure *Heavy Rain* is released in the UK.



1 March 1987
■ Namco releases *Rolling Thunder 2*, a sequel to its hit run-and-gun coin-op game from 1986.



2 March 2007
■ *Sonic And The Secret Rings* arrives in Europe for the Nintendo Wii.



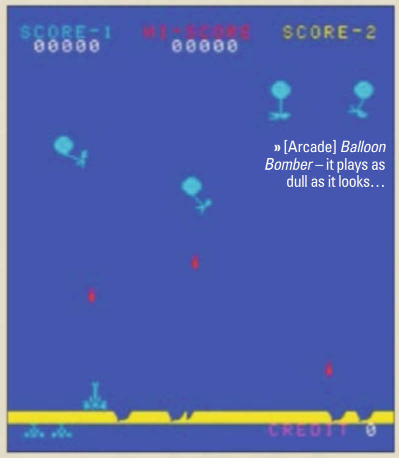
2 March 1982
■ The disappointing conversion of *Pac-Man* is released by Atari on its faux wood-grain 2600 console.



4 March 2014
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MARCH 1980



» [Arcade] *Balloon Bomber* – it plays as dull as it looks…

MARCH 1980 – Acorn plays with Atoms, Balloon Bomber bummer, double-team on Space Invaders, Sega unveils Samurai and Pro Monaco GP, Steel Worker stinks with Irem's Sky Chuter not far behind. Richard Burton saves his money this month…



There was a new home computer available to buy this month, the impressive looking Acorn Atom developed by Acorn Computers Ltd. The Atom could be bought in a range of states starting with the kit form option costing you just £120 but requiring a steady arm and a soldering iron, to a ready-to-use basic model available for £170 right up to the top of the range Atom complete with floating point ROM and a beefed up RAM and ROM both weighing in at an impressive 12K each – yours for just over £200.

It sold well initially but underwhelming software support and the emergence of Sinclair as a force in the home computing market quickly diluted the Atom's growth. The Atom was a lovely little machine with an equally lovely keyboard but it didn't quite hit the heights that Acorn had hoped for.

There was a whole smorgasbord of coin-op releases this month ranging in quality from top drawer to complete guff.

Taito released its latest arcade coin-op game, the shoot-'em-up *Balloon Bomber.* The aim of the game was simply to shoot the balloons with your tank before they can drop their deadly bomb payload onto you. If a bomb hits you it's a life lost, if it hits the ground a large crater appears at which point your room for manoeuvrability is significantly reduced as you cannot pass by it.

It was an extraordinarily simple game and it's rather unsophisticated gameplay and lack of variation destined *Balloon Bomber* for coin-op anonymity, although it did enjoy inclusion on the *Taito Legends 2* games compilation for the PlayStation 2 in 2006.

Space Invaders II was released by Midway and was the first coin-op to utilise the cooperative method of gaming. That said, Midway intended it to be more competitive than cooperative but both methods worked just as well when playing the game.

Space Invaders II was essentially just *Space Invaders* all over again but with two players situated at opposite ends of the screen. So you would have two sets of bunkers with player one and two blasting the usual aliens, while also trying to cripple each other's bunker protection.

Despite the interesting simultaneous two-player development, *Space Invaders II* remained a cocktail cabinet exclusive as well as an American exclusive. Such a shame, as the simultaneous two-player option gave the tired old format a kick-start which was never really built upon by Midway until *Super Space Invaders '91* was released 11 years later…

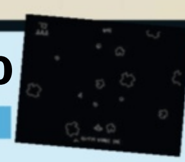
Also new this month was *Moon Alien Part 2*, a sequel to *Moon Alien* released by Nichibutsu in 1979. As you would expect from any game with the word 'alien' in it, *Moon Alien Part 2* was a fast-paced shoot-'em-up that relied heavily on *Galaxian* as its blueprint. Gameplay was more or less identical except for the introduction of an energy bar; otherwise it was completely uninspired stuff.



» [Arcade] *Steel Worker* is one of those games that stunk so badly, it's surprising anyone anywhere remembers it at all.

CHARTS

MARCH 1980



ARCADE

1	Asteroids (Atari)
2	Galaxian (Midway)
3	Space Invaders Part II (Midway)
4	Ozma Wars (SNK)
5	Lunar Lander (Atari)

THIS MONTH IN...

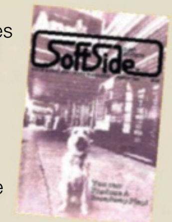
COIN CONNECTION

Atari's newest coin-op was to be *Atari Soccer*. This simplistic monochrome two- or four-player game with trackball control looked drab and miserable. It was actually really playable and, unlike most football games since, featured an offside rule. Thankfully there was no added time multi-ball option…



SOFTSIDE

SoftSide ran a feature called 'What Makes A Computer Game Appealing: A Game Designer's View'. It stated, "Shooting games, no matter what guise, are prime examples of the limited objective game. The level of boredom generated by these games rises proportionately with the number of times they are played." Epic fail.



COMPUTE

Atari announced that it had a licensing agreement with Taito to use the name *Space Invaders*, at that time the world's popular videogame, in connection with toys, home gaming, handheld games but not coin-op games. Expect to see *Space Invaders* lunchboxes and underpants in the coming months…





» [Arcade] You're a samurai and you have to dispatch other samurai and then take on the head samurai. Yep, *Samurai* was exceptionally repetitive…

Unoriginality doesn't necessarily mean unplayable though, and despite those misgivings it still played rather well.

Sega released a top-down driving game called *Pro Monaco GP*, another sequel this time to the original 1979 *Monaco GP* game of which the differences were slight. The new game would have different scoring all wrapped up in a larger cabinet style, but otherwise gameplay was very similar indeed.

This was a shame, as the original *Monaco GP* was a splendid racing game. It had beautifully colourful and detailed graphics, a variety of weather conditions and a seemingly endless supply of cars to overtake. It was frantically paced and extremely good fun. If only Sega had spent a bit more time working on *Pro Monaco GP* – we could be waxing lyrical about that too…

Another Sega coin-op release this month was the fighting game *Samurai*. You were a samurai taking on other samurai challengers in an enclosed arena. There were 12 of the blighters and they were backed up with chums who threw shuriken stars and chains with hooks on the end at you. Once you'd beaten the bejesus out of all 12 then Samurai Master appeared for a spot of fisticuffs.

The only pro going for Samurai was that it wasn't merely a reheated and rehashed *Space Invaders* clone. However, the cons were numerous; it was clunky to play, graphics were awful and it was insanely repetitive. Sadly, not one of Sega's finest products and probably why it remained firmly stuck exclusively in Japan and coin-op limbo.

Painfully dire coin-ops were not just a Sega speciality this month, with Taito offering the pitiful *Steel Worker*. Again, credit was due for attempting something different to the norm, but it was poorly devised and executed.

In *Steel Worker* you had to traverse a building site with a crane situated in the middle. You could lay a variety of differently shaped and sized steel girders to get you across and onto the next level. As a concept the idea was sound with an interesting strategy twist to the game. Unfortunately the ludicrously animated character and the hugely annoying sound effects made you loathe the game before it really got started.

It was back to familiar and popular territory for the final arcade release of the month; Irem's shoot-'em-up *Sky Chuter*. You controlled a tank manoeuvring along the bottom of the screen shooting up towards a constant barrage of aeroplanes and bombs attached to parachutes.

While it was fun in the short term, *Sky Chuter* got really old, very fast. Its small mono-coloured graphics looked like an early ZX Spectrum release with very little to impress graphically. Sound was of an equally mediocre standard while playing the game was frustrating rather than fun. With the exception of *Space Invaders II*, March was disappointing for its coin-op output.



» [Arcade] Another *Galaxian*-style clone, this time it was *Moon Alien Part 2* from Nichibutsu. It played rather well though.



» [Arcade] *Space Invaders II* had an ingenious simultaneous two-player mode that got overlooked by gamers.

MARCH WORLD NEWS

21 March saw the infamous shooting of JR Ewing in the American soap opera *Dallas*. Played by the late Larry Hagman, the scheming oil baron JR was shot twice by a mystery person while he was working late in his office. It led to a "Who shot JR?" worldwide phenomenon until it was resolved in November.



25 March saw the British Olympic Committee vote to attend the summer Olympic Games in Moscow after the USA and 64 other countries voted to boycott due to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. It left just 80 nations competing.

The BOC's decision went against the wishes of the British government who wanted to join the boycott. However, Britain did made a token boycott of the opening ceremony. Britain also competed under the Olympic flag in a mooted protest meaning the Olympic anthem and flag were used rather than the Union Jack whenever GB won a gold medal. We won five… so not very often…

27 March saw tragedy in the North Sea when a massive wave engulfed the Alexander Kielland accommodation platform. An undetected crack in one of the legs led the platform to capsize killing 123 of the 212 crew on board.

The accommodation platform housed oil workers and contained leisure, sleeping and kitchen facilities and was attached to the Edda oil rig when the wave hit. Poor weather conditions also hampered rescue attempts.



TANDY TRS-80

1. Datestones Of Ryn (Automated Simulations)
2. Adventure (Microsoft)
3. Star Trek (Adventure International)
4. Temple Of Apshai (Automated Simulations)
5. Android Nim (SoftSide)



ATARI 2600

1. Canyon Bomber (Atari)
2. Sky Diver (Atari)
3. Championship Soccer (Atari)
4. Superman (Atari)
5. Slot Machines (Atari)



MUSIC

1. Atomic (Blondie)
2. Coward Of The County (Kenny Rogers)
3. And The Beat Goes On (Whispers)
4. Carrie (Cliff Richard)
5. I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down (Elvis Costello)

BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM DECEMBER 1996



DECEMBER 1996 – Street Fighter EX is great, it's all downhill for Alpine Racer 2, Columns '97 stacks up, Krazy Ivan doesn't, Tempest 2000 is back and Christmas NiGHTS is free. Richard Burton starts his Christmas list…



Newly released into arcades this month and hoping to prise your Christmas present money from your frost-bitten fingers was the newest addition to the *Street Fighter* franchise, the rather fun *Street Fighter EX*.

Published by Capcom and Arika, *Street Fighter EX* took the series in a different direction, being the first to use polygon graphics in 3D settings. Thankfully the stellar heritage of *Street Fighter* endured with the gameplay remaining (largely) faithful to the 2D originals.

Aside from the multitude of combos and special moves that were included, a new feature, the Guard Break was introduced. Designed to break the resistance of a player who remains in a defensive blocking stance rather than getting stuck in, the Guard Break would break through their block and temporarily render them dizzy so you could give them a proper beating.

There were many new characters introduced to the roster, complementing the long-time favourites that remained. Ryu, Ken and Chun-Li were still there, as were new boys Skullomania, D Dark and Pullum. With a handful of hidden characters too, *Street Fighter EX* had everything covered.



» [Sega Saturn] It's just one level and it's free, but it's Christmas *NiGHTS* so prepare to fill your new Christmas underpants…



» [Sega Saturn] The Saturn gets a taste of *Tempest* but it still can't touch the Atari Jaguar version.

Christmas time is always better with a great big blob of snow, so what could be better than a spot of skiing brought to us by the newly-released *Alpine Racer 2* by Namco. *Alpine Racer 2* retained the unique yet fun control system of standing on a two metal plates that can be moved to simulate real skiing movements. Good for realism, not good for dodgy knees.

On inserting your coins you would get a choice of ski races – moguls, racing or freestyle – and a choice of course. *Alpine Racer 2* was a fun, fast game that really conveyed some feeling of speed on the downhill races where you had to reach time checkpoints to continue or the bumpy edge-heavy ankle-breaking turns of gate racing equally left you tired but happy… but mostly tired…

If planting your face into a snowy wall or an angry martial arts expert's fist seems a bit too painful for you then Sega's release of *Columns '97* would probably be more up your street. The puzzle videogame saw you attempt to link three or more of the same falling coloured jewels together causing them to disappear in the ongoing battle to keep your screen clear. Once the jewels reached the top of your screen then the game was over.

You could play head-to-head for added pressure or take on to the machine to see how long you could last. Despite it's similarity to other games of the puzzle genre and earlier *Columns* games, *Columns '97* was a polished piece of coding and as such was hugely fun to play.

It was away from the coin jangling pockets of arcade inhabitants and back to the comfy sofa-dwelling world of console gaming with the release of a new Psygnosis game for the Sega Saturn and PlayStation.

Krazy Ivan was the nickname of Ivan Popovich, a Russian commander who was tasked with stopping a robotic alien invasion. To aid him in such a daunting task he had at his disposal the Steel Cossack, a large armoured mechanical suit tooled-up with a ridiculous amount of weapons for the oncoming onslaught.

DECEMBER WORLD NEWS

11 December saw the death of comedian and satirist Willie Rushton. He co-founded the satirical magazine *Private Eye* and was a regular writer for various television and radio shows, acted in several movies and penned umpteen books while illustrating many other peoples'. Despite this slew of output, Willie Rushton is fondly remembered by many as the voices behind the characters in the animated kids television show, *The Trap Door*. Globbits!

20 December saw the death of astronomer, cosmologist and prolific author Carl Sagan. He popularised science and astronomy, making it accessible and interesting to all. He was a member of the SETI Institute, co-founded The Planetary Society, wrote the novel *Contact* which was later turned into a movie, wrote the introduction to Steven Hawking's book *A Brief History Of Time* and much more.

He suffered from myelodysplasia which required several bone marrow transplants and in his weakened state he later died from pneumonia aged 62.

29 December saw what was billed, at the time, as the last ever episode of *Only Fools And Horses*, the sitcom starring David Jason and Nicholas Lyndhurst. The episode was called 'Time On Our Hands' and finally saw Del Boy and Rodney become millionaires thanks to a rare watch that an antiques dealer spots in their garage and is later auctioned at Sotheby's.

The episode was watched by more than 24 million viewers, a record for a British sitcom. However, it wasn't the last episode, as three further Christmas specials were aired from 2001.



» [Arcade] *Street Fighter EX* was its first foray into 3D polygon territory. The end result was rather decent.

As you would expect from a Psygnosis game, the graphics were crisp and well defined and the gameplay was engaging, although some dodgy acting and awful Russian accents in the cutaway scenes were unintentionally good for comedic relief.

However, there was a big problem. *Krazy Ivan*'s alien shoot-fest was spread over five levels which could be completed by even the most ham-fisted of gamers in under an hour. That's the whole game, not one level. It was far too easy and despite some good reviews failed commercially.

There was great news for Saturn and PlayStation gamers with word that the Atari Jaguar favourite *Tempest 2000* was set to be remade for their systems.

The graphics would be upgraded with more complex level designs and a swath of new power-ups, but essentially the game was the *Tempest* of old. The PlayStation version was treated to so many changes that the game was eventually released as the renamed *Tempest X3*. While the games didn't have the impact that *Tempest 2000* did on the Jaguar, they were worthy conversions and immensely playable in their own right.



» [PlayStation] A delightfully designed game let down solely by the longevity of its gameplay.



» [Arcade] The puzzle genre was awash with games like this. Thankfully, *Columns '97* was one of the better ones.

In the season of eating, drinking and being extraordinarily merry, it's always nice to get a present. Sega treated its Saturn-owning gamers to a little gift in the form of *Christmas NiGHTS*, a one level Christmas-themed version of *NiGHTS Into Dreams* that was available through various Saturn console promotions and magazine giveaways.

While on the surface the seasonal prettification of the Spring Valley level from a classic Sega Saturn game might not seem much to get you throbbing with tinsel-encrusted excitement, delving a bit deeper finds something much more than was advertised. It wasn't just *Christmas NiGHTS*, it was *Winter NiGHTS* and several other seasonal variations to boot all thanks to an environment driven by the changes of the Saturn's calendar.

On Christmas Day Santa made an appearance, in November and January it was *Winter NiGHTS* and there were yet more graphical alterations when New Year's Day, April Fools Day and Halloween arrived. You could even play as Sonic The Hedgehog if you wanted.

The story was simple, with Claris and Elliot traipsing off to Nightopia in search of the star that was missing from the top of the Twin Seeds Christmas tree. As a one level freebie, it must surely rank as one of the best gaming giveaways ever… possibly bettering the *Your Sinclair* cover-mounted freebie of *Batty* for the Spectrum… maybe…

CHARTS

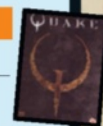
DECEMBER 1996

PLAYSTATION



1. Formula 1 (Psygnosis)
2. Bust-A-Move 2: Arcade Edition (Acclaim)
3. Resident Evil (Virgin Interactive)
4. Alien Trilogy (Acclaim)
5. WipEout 2097 (Psygnosis)

PC



1. Quake (GT Interactive)
2. Fade To Black (Electronic Arts)
3. Grand Prix II (MicroProse)
4. Transport Tycoon (MicroProse)
5. Theme Park (Electronic Arts)

AMIGA



1. Frontier: Elite 2 (Gametek)
2. Alien Breed 2 (Team 17)
3. Hired Guns (Psygnosis)
4. Body Blows Galactic (Team 17)
5. Premier Manager 2 (Gremlin)

MUSIC



1. Ice Ice Baby (Vanilla Ice)
2. Unchained Melody (Righteous Brothers)
3. Unbelievable (EMF)
4. Don't Worry (Kim Appleby)
5. It Takes Two (Rod Stewart & Tina Turner)

THIS MONTH IN…

CU AMIGA

With Christmas just around the corner *CU Amiga* had the obligatory Christmas gift guide featuring all manner of tat. Such delights as the ridiculous Quickshot Flightgrip 1 controller and an electronic alarm shaped like a bird were the picks from the bottom of Santa's crusty old sack.



MEAN MACHINES SEGA

Among the multitude of previews one stood out, *Grandia* by Game Arts for the Saturn. In what would become the first in the series, the fantasy role-playing game would gain massive worldwide support yet would remain a Japanese exclusive after the bizarre decision to cancel the English release…

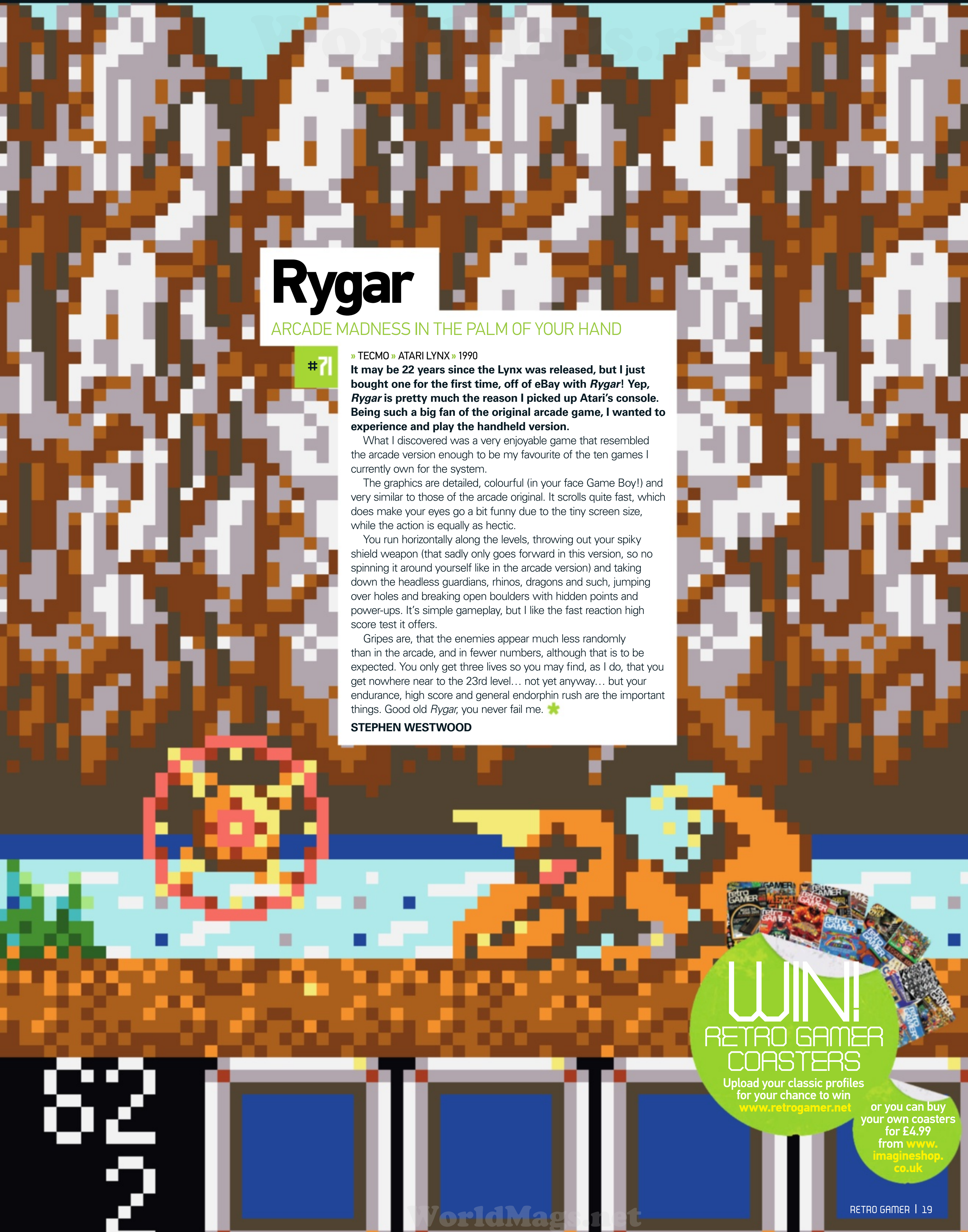


COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

The N64 was still three months away for UK gamers but that didn't stop *C&VG* from previewing the eagerly-awaited *Mario Kart 64*. The tracks were 3D rendered while the characters remained 2D. But the most important aspect, the gameplay, was bang on.




24480



Rygar

ARCADE MADNESS IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

#71

» TECMO » ATARI LYNX » 1990

It may be 22 years since the Lynx was released, but I just bought one for the first time, off of eBay with *Rygar*! Yep, *Rygar* is pretty much the reason I picked up Atari's console. Being such a big fan of the original arcade game, I wanted to experience and play the handheld version.

What I discovered was a very enjoyable game that resembled the arcade version enough to be my favourite of the ten games I currently own for the system.

The graphics are detailed, colourful (in your face Game Boy!) and very similar to those of the arcade original. It scrolls quite fast, which does make your eyes go a bit funny due to the tiny screen size, while the action is equally as hectic.

You run horizontally along the levels, throwing out your spiky shield weapon (that sadly only goes forward in this version, so no spinning it around yourself like in the arcade version) and taking down the headless guardians, rhinos, dragons and such, jumping over holes and breaking open boulders with hidden points and power-ups. It's simple gameplay, but I like the fast reaction high score test it offers.

Gripes are, that the enemies appear much less randomly than in the arcade, and in fewer numbers, although that is to be expected. You only get three lives so you may find, as I do, that you get nowhere near to the 23rd level… not yet anyway… but your endurance, high score and general endorphin rush are the important things. Good old *Rygar*, you never fail me.

STEPHEN WESTWOOD


30 YEARS
SUN
HELLO

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PAPERBOY

When Paperboy appeared in 1984 it demonstrated how delivering the news could become a fantastic game. Mike Bevan decides to revisit Easy Street

It's probably fair to say that we've always had a bit of a soft spot for *Paperboy*. Of all Atari's classic arcade games it's the one that best represents a time-capsule of Eighties American suburbia, with players guiding a heroic two-wheeled news vendor on his daily rounds through a distinctly bizarre, hazard-filled neighbourhood, distributing the Daily Sun newspaper (although presumably not the one Piers Morgan used to edit). Our pedal-powered protagonist dealt with the likes of break dancers, radio-controlled cars, dogs, road works and VW beetles, all while trying to achieve that elusive perfect paper round. This meant accurately flinging newspapers into customers' mailboxes while trying not to accidentally break any property or crash, all of which was a major feat in itself. Unless of course the house you are riding past belongs to a non-subscriber…

Paperboy was created by the team of lead engineer John Salwitz and gameplay designer Dave Ralston, who had become intrigued by the possibilities of designing a title with an isometric viewpoint after encountering Sega's *Zaxxon*. Coupled with the fact that Ralston had also done the rounds as a paperboy himself as a teenager and had a knack for producing the vibrant cartoon-style graphics that would fit beautifully into *Paperboy*'s world, it was the ideal partnership for producing what would emerge as a very unique coin-op. One aspect of the arcade game that most people will remember was the unusual handlebar controller, which was actually a modified version of the yoke from the company's famous *Star Wars* cabinet. With a similar, if rather more grounded control system to *Star Wars*, pushing forward on the handlebars increased your bike's velocity, while pulling back caused it to come to a somewhat wobbly, skidding halt. Buttons mounted on either side of the bars were also used to handily chuck newspapers at the nearest target.

At the start of the game players were given the option to of three different difficulty levels in the form of increasingly more hazardous neighbourhoods – Easy Street, Middle Road and Hard Way. Your objective was to perfectly deliver papers to subscribers for an entire week without becoming a casualty of the many perils of the 'burbs, from fire hydrants and drains to cars, erratic skateboarders and street ▶



» [Arcade] A swarm of bees will pursue the lackadaisical paperboy, so get moving…



STEVE WILCOX ON PAPERBOY

Elite's co-founder revisits the popular conversions it released



When did you first experience *Paperboy* and know that it would make a good home conversion?
I saw it and played it in the arcades in 1984/1985. It was so different to the massed ranks of scrolling shoot-'em-ups that populated the arcades at the time and it was so prevalent (despite the relatively high cost of the arcade cabinets) that it stood out as a natural for conversion to home computer formats.

How did you get the licence?
We went to Atari/Tengen's Palo Alto offices and were able to negotiate a deal.

How did you decide who would code each version? Was it decided on a first-come, first-served basis, or where there specific coders/teams in mind?
Our practice, certainly as far as the 8-bit conversions was concerned, was to scour the magazines for highly regarded 'original' games and track down the coders/artists behind them. Once we'd identified them, we made contact, met up and then invited them to work with us on the conversion of higher profile games. Steve Lamb and Tony Mack (*Paperboy* for the ZX Spectrum) were identified this way. They'd worked on a knock-off of *Marble Madness* (another Atari/Tengen arcade game) for Melbourne House and had shown that they had an interest in and the skills to work on arcade conversions. Later conversions for the Amiga or ST were often allocated to members of the in-house team, later spun-off and known as Motivetime.

What's the best conversion Elite was involved with and why?
Purely personally, the ZX Spectrum version. The 'colour clash' issue, in which the arcade game's scrolling crystalised, was to my mind dealt with elegantly by switching the play area to monochrome whilst retaining a colourful status panel.

And which is the worst?
I wouldn't wish to be critical of any particular conversion because I know the time, resource and technical limitations that surrounded their development. Having said that, were time travel possible, I'd revisit the C64 version. The pallet of that version could have been more vibrant, given the power of the device.

How was the iconic box art commissioned?
Atari provided us with some art they'd used to promote the arcade version and we developed it, a little, from there.

Why do you think *Paperboy* remains so popular?
For the same reasons it was popular 30 years ago. In a sea of me-too shoot-'em-ups it was a one-off then, as it is now. Couple that with its humourous cartoon graphics, relevant (to teenage eyes) theme and its delightful balance of challenge and reward and you've got an interactive masterpiece.



» [Arcade] In the Eighties there was a BMX training course at the end of every street.

brawls. The game lasted for seven in-game days, Monday through Sunday, each of which became progressively more treacherous. Making deliveries involved chucking your papers into customers' mailboxes, or taking the slightly easier option of trying to land them on the welcome mat on their porch for a reduced score. Along the way, your paperboy was required to pick up extra bundles of papers since he could only carry a limited number in the basket on the front of his bike. However these were sometimes located in rather deviously awkward to reach spots.

Extra points could be grabbed by vandalising windows, flowerpots and statues in non-subscribers' houses, typically represented by gloomy *Addams Family*-style residences. Care had to be taken not to damage any of your customers' dwellings though, as this understandably resulted in lost subscriptions and, on higher levels, the owner chasing you down the streets waving his fists. You couldn't just take it easy and attempt each street at a leisurely pace either as a swarm of killer bees would come buzzing after you. Such was the life of a lowly paperboy in the Eighties.

Making it to the end of the street unscathed opened up a bonus 'training' level in the form of the BMX-style course complete with jumps, water hazards and lots of traffic cones. There were also targets for practice newspaper flinging, and traversing jumps restocked your stock of newspaper ammunition to continue



» [Arcade] Mailboxes are harder targets, but score over twice as many points as doormats.



» [Arcade] She's not going to pull out in front of us is she?

your off-road jaunt. Finishing the rather tricky training course section gave you a tasty score bonus, and the respect of your tabloid-dispensing peers as well as anybody close at hand in the arcade who was there to witness it. And if you had also pulled off a perfect delivery by successfully supplying every Sun recipient with their daily dose of gossip columns and fake horoscopes, there'd be even more adulation, along with the welcome addition of a new subscriber to your round the next day.

The game is bursting with character and loads of neat touches, which is possibly less surprising on discovering that the game took an astonishing two years to develop and program. The people you'll encounter on your rounds range from the ordinary, like the kids driving go-karts and RC cars, to more bizarre characters like burglars, drunks, manhole-dwelling weirdos and even the grim reaper, complete with scythe. Your paperboy's successes or failures are 'reported' in the headlines of on-screen tabloids, colliding with obstacles produces a comical cartoon-style 'SMACK' or ends up with you wearing your bike's paper-basket for a hat. Amusing voice samples are sprinkled liberally throughout the game – we particularly like the yell of "awesome sauce!" when you make a tasty mailbox-drop from the other side of the street, and the "don't tell my boss" when you break something accidentally on purpose. If

EXTRA! EXTRA!

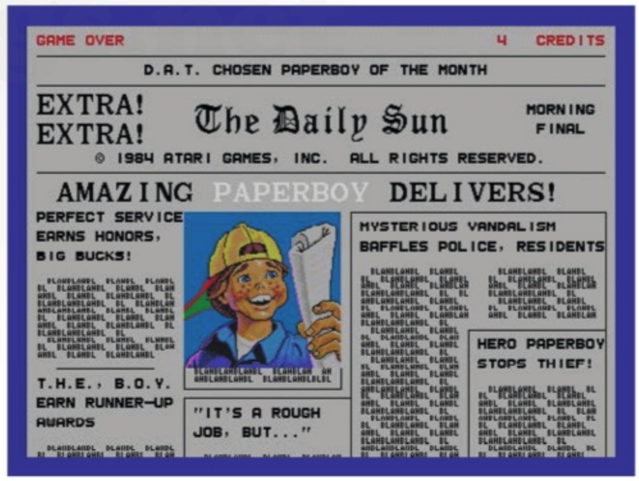
PIXEL PERFECT!

Our paper route was never this difficult to negotiate!





» [Arcade] Non-subscribers' houses have a definite unfriendly vibe about them.



» (Above) [Arcade] Do well and you'll see this cool screen.

» (Right) [Arcade] These kids in go-karts like to play bumper-cars with your bike.



▶ we've one criticism though it's the fact that your bike seems to have no capability to reverse, meaning if you get yourself into an inevitable collision course with an obstacle there's no choice but to crash and lose a life. Maybe your employee was too mean to provide you with a bike that could go backwards or something.

Seeing as a large-part of the attraction of the coin-op was the iconic pedal-bike controller, the various home conversions of *Paperboy* were definitely not as much fun as playing it in the arcades, but some still offered a reasonable experience for armchair pint-sized paper-dispatchers. The licence for home computer versions like the C64, Spectrum and BBC Micro was acquired by British software house Elite, and a sequel, *Paperboy 2*, was later produced for home formats by Mindscape. This didn't differ that much from the original, although it did add the option to play as a female paper… er… girl and do rather useless bunny hops. And just over two decades later, Rockstar Games featured a rather obvious tribute to *Paperboy* by shoehorning a whole newspaper-delivery mini-game into *Bully*, which played almost identically to the original arcade game, although this time in 3D. We'd have to say we much prefer the isometric chic of Salwitz and Ralston's concoction though, despite the fact that the chances of us ever making a seven-day perfect delivery streak is probably about as likely as that tabloid headline about a World War II B-52 bomber being found on the Moon. And then some.

> **"Having said that, were time travel possible I would revisit the C64 version"**
> Steve Wilcox



It may be 30 years later, but *Paperboy*'s gameplay remains as fresh as ever. While its computer and console-based sequels didn't always capture the magic of the original, the original arcade game's legacy remains untarnished. It's appeared on a variety of systems since its 1984 debut, featured prominently on the popular cartoon series *Captain N: The Games Master* and was even used for a score-based challenge on the Eighties children's quiz show First Class. Not bad for a game about delivering papers.

IT'S ALL IN THE CONTROLS… More games with unique controllers



Battlezone

Having never driven a real tank we're unsure of the authenticity of *Battlezone*'s twin-stick control scheme, but it certainly added an extra dimension to piloting your vehicle through an eerie vector landscape, and using alternate left or right sticks to spin on your axis allowed for some nifty manoeuvres when the shells started flying.



720°

John Salwitz and Dave Ralston's follow-up to *Paperboy* had similarly Eighties-influenced origins, this time simulating the joys of urban skateboarding. It was notable for featuring a non-centering joystick that moved in a circular fashion which was a boon for pulling off all manner of nifty skating moves and cunning stunts.



Prop Cycle

Prop Cycle's arcade cabinet featured nothing less than a full-blown exercise-bike as its control method, a sort of prototype to the deluge of interactive fitness titles on the Wii. Furious pedalling was required to keep your on-screen flying contraption airborne, while the handlebar steering wheel owed an obvious debt to *Paperboy*.



Sega Bass Fishing

First released as an arcade title in 1997, the *Sega Bass Fishing* coin-op came complete with an authentic-looking fishing rod and line. Catching each virtual bass required casting then hooking your target and yanking away to get the right line tension to reel it in. There was later a Dreamcast port that supported a native fishing controller.



Samba De Amigo

Rhythm and music-themed games were all the rage in the early 21st Century with the likes of *Donkey Konga*, *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*. This legendary Dreamcast game has to be one of our all-time faves though, with its crazy monkey-shaking beats and funky samba tunes. After all, who doesn't want to have a go on a nice pair of maracas?

LYNX BOY

Al Baker on converting Paperboy to Atari's superb little handheld





How did you get the job of converting *Paperboy* to the Atari Lynx?
Back then I'd been writing a couple of columns for some of the computer magazines, one of which was 'Al Baker's Game Corner'. Also, I'd already done several games, including eight games published for the Atari 400/800 and sold under the Sears label. Thus, I had a modest rep in the industry. Several people at Atari knew me and suggested I come in to their local office and consider doing one or more games for them. One of them was *Paperboy.*

Had you played *Paperboy* before you converted it and what did you think of it?
Not really. I never really did get into the drop-a-quarter arcade games. I was and am more into role-playing games. I did like the game though and thoroughly enjoyed doing it. They gave me an actual *Paperboy* arcade game to install at home, so I ended up playing it for many, many hours. It was addicting, although playing a game over and over because you want to reproduce the experience on another platform is not the same thing as simply playing it for fun.

What was the biggest technical challenge you faced when converting it?
There were four equally big challenges for all games back then: speed, features, size and reliability (no bugs). I'm ignoring the near impossibility of doing all those in six months! It had to have enough frames per second to be fun and not distracting, with as many of the features as the original game as humanly possible, all fitting within the limited resources of the hardware, and with no bugs! Back then there was no fixing a bug in software burnt into a cartridge.

Were you pleased with the end result? Would you change anything about the port?
Not a thing. I was very pleased, as was Atari. My son was also pleased. He was in junior high at the time and did the art when the original art just didn't seem to make it. One of the objects he did was the taxi and he put his initials, NB, on the licence plate. That picture ended up on the box! You can bet that got passed around to everyone at school!

Is it true the Lynx version was based on the Atari ST code?
Here my memory is vague, but I'm pretty sure I started from scratch. My mandate was to play the original and reproduce it. I do believe I was able to use most of the art. Another game I did for the Lynx was *Pit Fighter* and I did start off with the original arcade C code.

The Atari Lynx had many great arcade conversions. Why do you think this was?
Because Atari had great arcade games, understood arcade games and knew how to make them fun. The Atari Lynx was an extension of that philosophy.



CONVERSION CAPERS

There's a huge number of Paperboy conversions. Here are some of the best and worst



Commodore 64 ▲

While we remember not being too impressed by its chunky expanded sprites even back in the day, the C64 version isn't too shabby at all, with the standout aspect being Mark Cooksey's neat remix of the in-game music. The programmers seem to have taken a few liberties in adding the likes of Sinclair C5s and flying tyres though.



Atari Lynx ▲

The Lynx port is probably the best of the more contemporary handheld versions, which also included releases on the Sega Game Gear, Nintendo Game Boy and Game Boy Color. Programmer Al Baker did a fantastic job with his coding, and it all moves along at a very solid pace. The controls are also of a high standard, and while the lack the sheer precision of the arcade game, it's nevertheless very easy to negotiate the often packed streets. All three difficulty levels are included, the obstacle course is there in all its glory, while even the music is fairly decent. It's not quite managed to capture the vibrancy of the Master System version, but this remains a superb conversion that Lynx owners can be proud of.

> **"I know Dave Ralston was a paperboy when he was younger"**
> John Salwitz

WORST

Apple II ▶

Why Mindscape produced *Paperboy* in mainly green and purple is a mystery; the Apple II certainly offers far less garish colour-combinations. Aesthetics aside, the gameplay feels pretty authentic compared to the original game, although jerky scrolling and unresponsive controls prove to be quite frustrating.



Apple IIGS ▶

Although *Paperboy* fares better on the GS than the Apple II, Mindscape didn't really take advantage of the GS's 16-bit hardware. While everything runs smoothly and at speed, the graphics look decidedly 8-bit in nature, which is a shame as the machine is capable of so much more. While the controls feel better than the Apple II outing, they're far from perfect. The final issue is some quirky collision detection.





BBC Micro

Paperboy on the Beeb looks like a slightly higher-res version of the Spectrum port, though it does lack the speed of the Speccy release – in fact your delivery bike seems stuck in first gear. Programmer Andy Williams recently noted that the BBC wasn't really suited to converting the game, and it shows.



Amstrad CPC

This is arguably the most authentic-looking of the 8-bit conversions, with nice colourful visuals and plenty of detail, although the downside is the slightly small screen window and lack of in-game sound. We can only imagine Amstrad owners would have been rather envious of C64 or even Spectrum owners in this respect…



Commodore 16 & Plus/4

Given that the C64 version of *Paperboy* wasn't exactly a masterpiece, porting it to the beige breadbin's little brothers was never going to be easy. Elite passed the honour to Kingsoft, which made a brave stab at a near impossible job. It's all a bit blocky-looking and far too easy.



DOS

While the DOS version does have some nice visuals, the screen feels too zoomed-in at times. As a result going onto the road is a huge risk, as you'll often have little time to react to danger. It's an otherwise decent port, reminding us of the rather spiffy Master System version, although the music is pretty weak overall.



Amiga

As expected, the Amiga and Atari ST versions are very similar to each other, although we prefer the playing area of the Amiga version. They are both pretty similar to the Master System port, although the Amiga port has the best sound, with a remixed in-game tune with some fancy slap-bass shenanigans going on.

ily Sun

MORNING FINAL

Spectrum ▼

Despite the slightly wobbly scrolling, monochrome appearance and sparse sound the Spectrum version of *Paperboy* is one of the most playable of Elite's home conversions. We lost hours playing this back in the day and it's great to see that Elite's smart conversion of Atari's classic game has lost none of its magic over the years. It moves at a fair old pace, the controls are extremely responsive and your paperboy, along with the neighbourhood's various denizens, is well animated. Ignore its drab look and revel in the fun gameplay.





Master System ▲

The Master System conversion is actually one of our favourites, bearing a strong visual resemblance to the arcade game, controlling well and only really being let down by its ear-jangling in-game music. Aside from that it's one of the finest arcade ports on the console. We rather like the rendition of the killer poodle too.

PS2/Xbox/GameCube/PSP/PC ▼

Paperboy was also released on *Midway Arcade Treasures* in 2003, with the PSP version appearing two years later. As with the Xbox 360 port it's a solid conversion with authentic visuals and sounds, although without the achievements and leaderboards (apart from the Xbox). Sadly the PSP version isn't up to the same standard and is let down by stretched visuals.

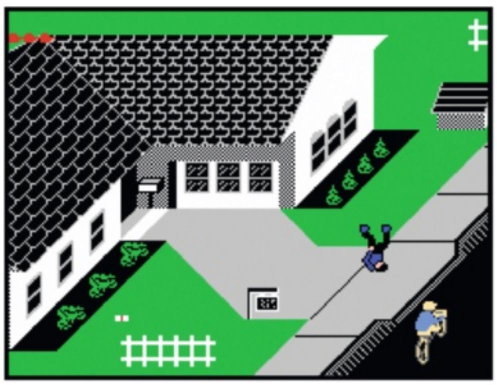




Xbox 360 ▶

You'd expect a conversion of *Paperboy* on the Xbox 360 to be arcade-perfect, and you'd be correct. Digital Eclipse's port is obviously not able to replicate the controls of the original arcade game, but it's otherwise spot on with identical graphics and sound.





NES ◀

Unfortunately, for some reason the NES conversion of Paperboy is a bit on the iffy side, especially compared to the far superior Master System version. It's a tad washed-out, many of the in-game sprites seem badly drawn and poorly animated and the perspective is all over the place. Still, at least the music is pretty good.



Game Gear

The Game Gear version appears to be largely identical to the Master System offering, meaning it has great visuals and some rather annoying in-game music. Like many other versions, however, it suffers from a zoomed-in view, making straying onto the road incredibly dangerous. It remains one of the better handheld ports though.



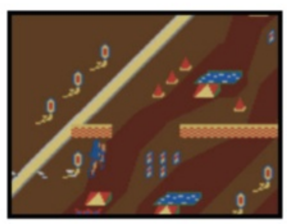
Atari ST

As we've already mentioned, the Atari ST is a very decent conversion that is extremely similar to the highly enjoyable Amiga outing. The music sounds a little weaker to our ears, but graphically it's very slick indeed. The small road area does make it quite hard to avoid any incoming vehicles though.



Game Boy

Mindscape's Game Boy conversion appears to be based on the NES outing, so shares similar problems. It looks okay and has a nice rendition of the theme tune, but the controls feel a little loose at times. The collision detection is also a little iffy, meaning you'll often hit enemies you think you're well clear of.



Game Boy Color

Unlike the original Game Boy version, the Color outing does have the street difficulty. Music sounds slightly better and the graphics aren't bad, but it suffers from the same collision issues and loose controls of the Game Boy outing. It's arguably better, but isn't a patch on the Game Gear or Lynx offerings.



Mega Drive

This port is by far the closest visually to the arcade game, as well as being the only conversion to feature both in-game music plus the arcade game's digitised voice samples. However, it doesn't control quite as well as the Master System version and suffers occasional dodgy collision detention, knocking it down a mark or two.

The Daily Sun

MORNING FINAL

THE WORLD'S MOST THROWABLE NEWSPAPER

JOHN SALWITZ

Paperboy's lead engineer revisits his iconic arcade game



"Remember that, back in 1982/1983, Paperboy was pretty much cutting-edge technology"
John Salwitz

When did you realise that *Paperboy* was going to be popular?
The first moment really was when we were still making the game and other people in the company began playing the game in our lab. At Atari, this is your first good indication that you had a winner. Dave Ralston and myself would be taking notes as they played and then make adjustments afterwards. It was a great system that worked really well. Later, this belief was confirmed in field test, which of course was wonderful to observe.

So does that happen now?
Not really as much. Games in development compete with lots of other games and so getting people to play your game in development can be a bit harder. That was one of the wonderful things about Atari, everything was new and exciting and it was a great place for creative people to be.

So Atari was a great place to work?
Yes, at Atari you were given the opportunity to create original titles and were not bound to stay with the sequels of those titles. This was a great strength and weakness of Atari as it gave game makers incredible opportunity to explore and create but also meant that we may have not gotten as much as we could out of our IP.

Companies like EA (where I work now) are incredibly good at leveraging existing IP. But, of course, that means that people tend to stay on the same franchises for a lot longer. Sometimes, a lot longer than they really want to.

Did you apply any of your own paperboy experience when making the game?
[Laughs] What a great question. I wasn't much of a paperboy growing up. I know Dave Ralston, who came up with the idea of the game, was a paperboy when he was younger, but I'm pretty sure nothing in it is based on any of his real-life experiences.



How much pressure was there at Atari while making the game?
There was obviously pressure, but it wasn't heavy handed. The great thing about Atari back then was that it was this amazing creative think tank where you were left to pretty much come up with your own ideas. There were obviously deadlines to meet of course, and *Paperboy* took two years to make, but there wasn't any real pressure as such.

Why did it take so long?
You have to remember that, back in 1982/1983, *Paperboy* was pretty much cutting edge technology. While it eventually used the Atari System 2 [arcade board] it hadn't been created at the time. So, we were dealing with a new hardware, a new (large) design and lots of software, art, animation, music and so forth. We were treading new ground, which is part of the reason why developing *Paperboy* was so exciting.

How did you and Dave end up working on the game?
I started at Atari in 1981 and Dave had already been there a good six months before me. I was assigned to work on a game with Dave which was a hybrid of pinball and video called *Akka Arrh*. We took about nine months to do that game (it ended up being video only). We continued working together after *Akka Arrh* was 'finished' and continued onto *Paperboy*. We've been friends ever since.

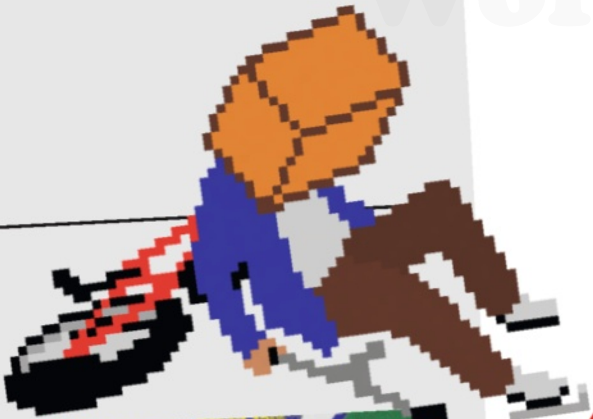
What was the trickiest aspect about working on *Paperboy*?
It was mainly the technology side that presented problems. From an engineering perspective, the biggest problem was the size and complexity of the software. Given the time, this was a fairly large code project and just keeping it running and performing was challenging.

When did you find out about the high score bug and did you get in trouble?
[Laughs] We certainly didn't get in trouble but I was always really nervous when a game went out anyway. In very early versions of the game you could take a hard right before the obstacle course and effectively right along the side forever racking up a huge score. It was obviously a problem and as such we needed to burn new EPROMS (it ended up being a tiny line of code that needed changing) but I certainly don't recall anyone shouting at us at the time. [Continues laughing] Frankly, nobody needed to shout at us.

Did you know that *Paperboy* was on a popular children's TV show in the Eighties called *First Class*?
[Laughs] Wow I did not know that, that's amazing.

Why do you think *Paperboy* was converted to so many different systems? Did you have any involvement with them?
No, I took a little interest of the NES version. That was really popular, it sold over a million copies. It was far more popular that the arcade game. I know Dave was involved in quite a few of the conversions, but my input was extremely limited. I think it received so many conversions because it had straightforward mechanics that translated across easily. I was also a bit of an arcade snob at the time and didn't really appreciate what was going on in the home market. If I knew how much money they were generating I may have paid more attention [laughs].

Tell us a cool Paperboy anecdote?
Funnily enough, last year I was sitting down in a restaurant with my wife and daughter. As we were eating our meal I heard a couple behind us, probably in their 30s and out on a first date. The man was asking the woman if she played any games and when she said 'not really' he started going on about Nintendo and how





he loved *Paperboy*. After they had finished their meal I asked him about *Paperboy* and if he has ever played the arcade version and he said 'yes'. My daughter told me I should I have told him I made it, but it was just nice hearing he was so excited about it.

How important was Dave Ralston to *Paperboy's* success

Amazingly important, the game would not have happened without Dave's strength and vision. It was Dave that came up with the original idea [he was the gameplay designer] and Dave that did all the amazingly detailed isometric visuals. At one stage it looked like *Paperboy* might get cancelled, but Dave's vision and determination helped ensure it was finished.

Did you ever think you'd still be in the industry after all this time?

It's not something that I ever thought about if I'm honest. Having said that, I do love the games industry. There's always lots of exciting things happening, so it's definitely a good place to have a career.

Why do you think *Paperboy* remains so popular with gamers?

30 years ago I gave my father a *Paperboy* T-shirt. He's 88 now and still wears it and people will often come up to him and say things like 'wow, *Paperboy*, I used to love playing that'. I think people remember the joy that they had playing the game and so they still like playing it. We listen to old tunes because it reminds us of things that make us happy. I also think it remains popular because it was just a good game that still holds up today. Even as technology gets better a great game will always be a great game and I think *Paperboy* is testament to that.

GET A JOB!



More profession-based videogames



Tapper

Another classic arcade busman's holiday, *Tapper* puts you in the role of a moustachioed barman in the world's busiest beer joint, which seems to be equipped with four beer counters teeming with unruly customers. Serving up the cold stuff involves sliding pints along to a horde of thirsty cowboys, jocks or aliens, grabbing tips and taking care to catch returning empty glasses before they drop.



Burger Time

If rustling up giant hamburgers while being chased by a hot dog, a pickle and fried egg is your thing, look no further than *Burger Time*. It's all in a day's work for chef Peter Pepper as he clambers around a series of platforms and ladders dropping buns, lettuce and meat patties onto massive plates for the delectation of his clientele, while dispatching baddies with pepper or squashing them with ingredients.



Night Shift

This inventive platform game from LucasArts is a curious mix of action and puzzle-solving, set in a very peculiar toy factory run by the equally weird conglomerate, Industrial Might and Logic. As Fred or Fiona Fixit you're tasked with keeping a massive machine nicknamed 'The Beast' cranking out dinky R2-D2s, Darth Vaders and the like, while providing a supply of pedal-power and correctly coloured paint.



APB

APB ('All Points Bulletin') is an Atari arcade game that simulated the day-to-day life of a police officer, a role which may or not have involved eating doughnuts and roughing up transients. Using a top-down view similar to the first couple of *Grand Theft Auto* games, early missions involve busting motorists for littering and speeding before moving on to the nitty-gritty of arresting proper criminals.



Timber

Another blue-collar profession given an arcade makeover by the manufacturers of *Tapper*, this time the focus moved from bar-keeping to lumberjackery. Under the watchful eye of his boss your rugged axeman had to work quickly and chop down the required quota of trees before presumably wandering off to eat his lunch and go to the lavatory. Then hang around in bars causing mayhem for Mr Tapper.



Crazy Taxi

Buckle up for a bumpy ride in Sega's arcade driving game where it's a race to pick up fare-paying passengers and get them to their destinations in the most outrageous way possible. Weaving through traffic like a loon, making epic jumps and recklessly burning through pedestrian malls are all encouraged in order to get them to their destination in the fastest possible time and collect the maximum cash reward.



Trashman

Emptying out the bins in a leafy English suburb may not sound like the recipe for an entertaining videogame but nowadays Malcolm Evans's eccentric Spectrum collect-'em-up is viewed as something of a cult classic. There's a *Frogger*-like feel to the way the streets are laid out, and retrieving the garbage while keeping off the grass and having bizarre conversations with home-owners is surprisingly addictive. It's a game we'd love to see updated, but that's sadly unlikely to happen.

A MOMENT WITH...



Charles Cecil

Against all odds the first part of a new Broken Sword has been released. We spoke to Charles Cecil about the exciting Kickstarter project

Who is Charles Cecil?

Charles Cecil has worked in the videogame industry for more than 30 years, co-founding Revolution Software in 1990. Based in Hull and then York, the company has been responsible for a string of popular point-and-click adventures including *Lure Of The Temptress* and *Beneath A Steel Sky*, but none have been as popular as the *Broken Sword* series. The latest game in that franchise is *The Serpent's Curse*, which was created after receiving $771,561 of Kickstarter cash and was launched at the end of 2013.



» [PC] Part one of *Broken Sword 5: The Serpent's Curse* is out now. We'll review the full game soon.

How does it feel to have revived *Broken Sword* after so many years?

It's great. We are fortunate in owning the rights to all our games, so can choose what to do and when. It was with some trepidation that we launched the Kickstarter appeal for *Broken Sword 5* last August, but the positivity and excitement of our fans gave us huge encouragement – they have been enormously enthusiastic throughout the whole development.

What is your proudest memory of the game's development?

I received a note from a man who explained that as a child he had a very close relationship with his grandmother and that one of his fondest memories was of playing *Broken Sword* with her and solving the puzzles as a team. So certainly my proudest moments have been in discovering that the *Broken Sword* games, and now *Broken Sword 5*, have provided amazing experiences for so many people.

What is the most difficult thing you encountered during the Kickstarter funding process?

When we were planning the Kickstarter appeal, very few games projects had launched – it was all so new. So drawing up the plan was difficult – there were no rules. But that also made it exciting. The guys at Stainless had successfully Kickstarted *Carmageddon: Reincarnation* and were really generous in offering us advice. Once we launched, it all went crazy – there was so much energy and excitement from the fans, and it then felt that we were back in control.

What are the benefits of using Kickstarter?

Kickstarter provided funds and it has also allowed us to communicate directly with our fans. When we released the initial Kickstarter video, we received comments that George's jaw shape was slightly wrong and that the characters didn't adequately fit into the background. This gave us the opportunity to immediately re-model George's face as well as create techniques to generate shadow/light rim around the characters.

How do you think the new *Broken Sword* will be remembered?

At the highest level, the objective was to write a game that feels familiar, capturing everything that people love about point-and-click adventures. But also feeling utterly contemporary: high-resolution backgrounds, smooth animation, high quality audio and logical gameplay. I hope that people will consider that we achieved this objective and will remember the game as such.

Why did you decide to make the new *Broken Sword* in two parts?

I had been planning to write two smaller games with an overarching narrative – Revolution didn't have the funds necessary to create one large game at the time. Thanks to the success of Kickstarter, and in particular the stretch goals, I decided to merge the two stories into one larger, more ambitious game. By splitting the game, we were able to take the pressure off and spend the time needed to polish *Episode 2*. And *Episode 2* is action-packed.

» [PC] It's great to see George and Nicole in action once again. Thanks Kickstarter.



How do you view the point-and-click industry today?

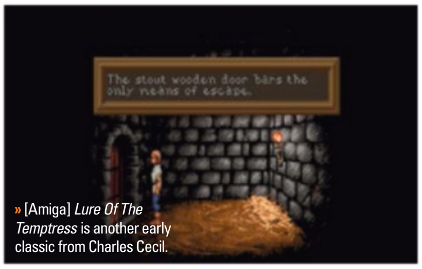
There are some great point-and-click games being written by companies like Daedalic. But the adventure is quite a broad genre—one which has evolved throughout the history of videogames while remaining, in some ways, remarkably stable. I have enjoyed playing other adventures – *Beyond: Two Souls*, which leans towards action-adventure and, of course, *The Walking Dead* which is interactive narrative.

How different was making *Broken Sword* today as opposed to 20 years ago?

The PlayStation changed the landscape for ever – creating a hugely successful console that appealed to young adults rather than kids. But its enormous success unwittingly crippled the adventure game – retailers chose to stock 3D, visceral games that appealed to that new market, instead of 'traditional' games such as adventures. Clearly the love of adventures didn't go away – particularly in Germany. With the advent of digital distribution, without the need to fight for a slot at retail, developers were able to write and publish their own adventure games.



» [Amiga] We'd love to see a Kickstarter-based sequel to *Beneath A Steel Sky*.



» [Amiga] *Lure Of The Temptress* is another early classic from Charles Cecil.

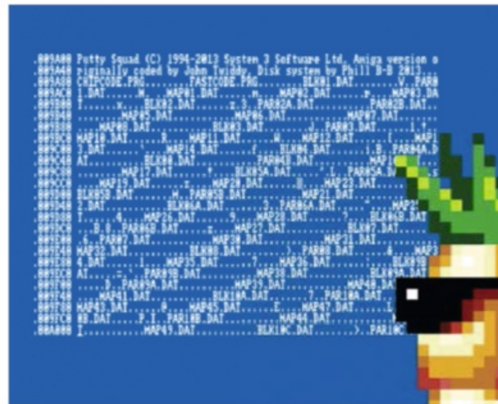


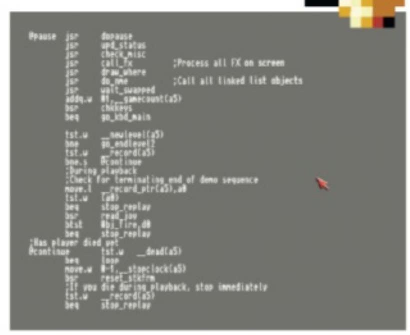
Resurrecting Putty Squad

Christmas is a time for miracles, but this one was 19 years in the making. Darran Jones speaks to those responsible for resurrecting System 3's Putty Squad



» [Amiga] The graphics in *Putty Squad* are really impressive, showing just what the 1200 is capable of when pushed.


» Phill's name appears as a hidden message in the disk directory.


» Here's an example of some of the source code found in Putty Squad.



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** SYSTEM 3
- » **DEVELOPER:** JOHN TWIDDY
- » **RELEASED:** 2013
- » **PLATFORM:** AMIGA 1200
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

Few Amiga owners will forget 24 December 2013 for it was the day that the impossible happened. Some 19 years after its original release date, the Amiga 1200 version of *Putty Squad* was finally released. For many Amiga owners it was nothing short of a Christmas miracle.

So why on earth would an ancient computer game get published nearly two decades after its original release? To begin this answer we'll need to go back to issue 64 when we interviewed System 3's John Twiddy about his impressive career. John revealed to us that he had not only converted the Amiga version of *Putty Squad* to PC, but more importantly, that he still had the original code at home somewhere. Needless to say the Amiga community became very excited.

Of course, if you go back and read the Amiga magazines of 1994, the excitement surrounding *Putty Squad* becomes a lot more obvious. *Putty Squad* was set to be the last big hurrah for System 3 on Commodore's 32-bit machine, and the reviews for it were very good indeed. The excitement was further fuelled by the release of a seven-level demo with issue 41 of *Amiga Power*, which gave a further indication of the greatness that was to come.

"I played the demo back in 1994 I think it was, and thought it was a quite polished game," recalls Amiga community member Phill Boag-Butcher, who is mainly responsible for *Putty Squad*'s miraculous return. "In all honesty, I preferred the graphical style of the original *Putty*, but certainly I preferred the gameplay mechanics of *Putty Squad*. I was looking forward to its release."

The release didn't come however, and Phill joined thousands of other Amiga owners in wondering about *Putty Squad*'s abrupt cancellation. "I was utterly mystified to be honest," he continues. "For sure the Sony PlayStation had a massive effect on not only the Amiga, but the SNES and Mega Drive, but other software companies were still releasing some big name titles [from] 1994 to 1997. *Putty Squad* would have fit right in with what was being released at the time, and would have been a desperately needed title for owners of A1200 Amigas, because there was precious little that actually utilised AGA machines in a way that some of the elements of *Putty Squad* did."

For many games that would have been the end of the road, but *Putty Squad*'s adventure was far from finished. In fact, it was just getting started…

In 2010, System 3 revealed it would be releasing a new *Putty Squad* on PlayStation Vita, which instantly reminded Amiga owners of their missing game. After the console's launch came and went the Vita game was assumed to be in development hell. It hadn't been forgotten though, and in 2013 System 3 revealed via **Retro Gamer** that not only would its game be appearing on Vita, it would also be released on other systems as well, including the Wii U and PS4. Even more amazingly, Mark Cale revealed that System 3 was planning to bring back the original Amiga game on a 3.5 floppy disk that would be sold with limited editions of the game.

The Amiga community went berserk, but then, just a few short weeks later, Mark Cale revealed in an interview with Eurogamer that despite their best attempts the game wouldn't be manufactured after all. It led to a furious ▶



» [Amiga] Interested in playing System 3's missing game? Head to **www.system3.com/promotional-download/puttysquadamiga/**

UNDER WRAPS

The secret you just can't share

Non-disclosure agreements are common in today's game industry, but it's rare to see them in force for a 19-year-old game. That's what happened with *Putty Squad* though, as Mark and John needed to know that Phill could weave his magic before their intentions were revealed to the Amiga community. "I have to admit it was frustrating to read some of the negative comments about it not being available as a pre-order game giveaway with other formats, especially as a number of the fans did not know we were working on a digital solution," sighs Mark about the continued barrage of insults that were continuing while Phill and a small part of the Amiga community worked on the game.

"Some even doubted that the game ever existed on the Amiga and thought it was all one big PR spin about a game that never existed except on some old cover mounts," he continues. "Hopefully now that the game is out there, people will appreciate the effort we put in to giving this to them for Christmas as a gift for all the support and passion they showed for this game for nearly 20 years. More importantly I hope people really appreciate the hard work that Phill did to make this happen and the support that John gave him."



"The community came back and suggested we create an ADF image"

Mark Cale

▶ assault on both Mark Cale and System 3, with many assuming the news had been nothing more than a publicity stunt to fuel interest in the new game. Something that Mark insists simply wasn't correct…

"When we first looked at the idea of releasing a disk version of *Putty Squad* for the Amiga, we were surprised by how expensive it would have been to create a two-disk product. Because it is no longer a common format we were getting prices of £3 per disk and it was looking like it would be across three disks initially," explains Mark about the reason the idea was ultimately dropped – much to the dismay of excited fans. "It would have been great to see the game back in the chart 20 years on if we had been able to give it away as part of a pre-order campaign, but it just was not possible."

Phill has his own thoughts on the very public backlash that System 3 faced. "Without wanting to direct too much criticism toward System 3, I think they and other software companies and developers utterly underestimate the goodwill that the Amiga still generates with people," he begins. "There's still a massive amount of people that own the real hardware, there's a hell of a lot of people that are properly into their Amiga emulation, and WinUAE is massively supported by Toni Wilen who is incredible at updating and making WinUAE more like a real Amiga everyday. Put simply, there's still a hell of a lot of people out there that still use Amiga related hardware/software and have long memories." Unsurprisingly Phill wasn't surprised when things turned sour. "All of a sudden this 'niche community' got quite vocal about it and it became apparent very quickly that this was publicity of the kind that System 3 didn't need or want, that their actual good intentions to release were now being, in my opinion, turned into a PR disaster."

By now Phill decided it was time to contact System 3 and find out what exactly was going on. He originally wrote an angry letter, convinced the company had been lying about the code and hoping to disprove Mark Cale on the EAB (English Amiga Board) forum. After logically thinking things through he changed tack, offering to not only take care of the Amiga mastering of *Putty Squad*, but more importantly, offering the service free of charge. It got the desired effect and he received a positive response.

"Initially I wasn't going to be doing *Putty Squad*," he reveals to us. "Mark and John were frankly inundated with requests to help in getting the game released, but having spoken to John about it, the tone of my letter that spelt out in no uncertain terms that not only had I done this rescue for a previous software company (Gremlin Interactive), I could do so again – my Amiga experience was still fresh and I could do this without any problems."

Mark is also grateful that the email arrived, as it suddenly gave System 3 a solution. "We are aware that System 3 has a lot of fans of the games we have produced over the years and it is nice to be able to reward peoples' loyalty in some way," he begins. "So we looked at other ways to offer *Putty Squad* to the fans. The community came back and suggested we create an ADF image of the game and let it be downloaded that way. This was the perfect solution and so we set out to get the game ready to be remastered to allow it to be downloaded as an ADF image."

Still, it would still take more than good intentions on behalf of System 3 and Phill to bring *Putty Squad* to the masses however, as there were numerous issues that needed to be ironed out first. Some of those problems





DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE LAST NINJA
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1987

IKARI WARRIORS (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: C64
YEAR: 1988

COOL SPOT
SYSTEM: AMIGA
YEAR: 1993

» (Left) [Amiga] Save enough putties and you'll unlock the next exit.

» (Right) [Amiga] There's an impressive amount of variety in *Putty Squad* and you'll traverse all kinds of exotic locations during the course of the game.





» [Amiga] Putty has a number of skills, but you'll be punching things quite a bit.

resolved around cracking *Putty Squad*'s copy protection. Fortunately, Phill's 'colourful' past helped ensure that he was highly qualified for what was needed. "I also go by the moniker of Galahad, and have been a member of some rather questionable organisations with not entirely honourable intentions, one of the most famous of which is Fairlight, which started life on the C64, progressed to the Amiga, PC, SNES and Mega Drive," he explains. "However, having the very skills of being able to remove copy protection is exactly what was required to remaster *Putty Squad*, and without wanting to give too much away, I might have been intimately aware of the copy protection system that John Twiddy employed on most of his Amiga titles, and knew how it worked and was implemented… and that might have been useful!"

Those hacking skills turned out to be very useful, and before long Phill was hard at work on remastering *Putty Squad*. Surprisingly, Phill's communication with System 3 and original developer John Twiddy was actually quite minimal. "System 3 pretty much left me to get on with it once I'd proven to John that I knew what I was doing," he continues. "I decided to keep John in constant touch with what I was doing with regular email correspondence, so he would know they hadn't just passed on their baby to an idiot who talked a lot but couldn't actually do anything! I think John was reassured after a couple of emails, it was obvious to him that I understood various parts of his code, the problems in mastering it, having to junk all of his disk system and the reasons why, and he was fairly happy at the progress I was making." That progress was important as well because Mark Cale was determined that *Putty Squad* would be made available on Christmas Eve, the ultimate goodwill gesture to the community who had previously slated him and System 3 a few short months before. Phill was equally adamant about the strict deadline, wanting to make Mark's wish a reality.

There were obviously issues working with 20-year-old code however, and Phill certainly had his hands full – particularly when it came to the PsyQ system that *Putty Squad* employed. Phill explained that it was a cross-development system developed by Psygnosis for other games developers and that it was used for a variety of other consoles and computers including the SNES, Mega Drive and Saturn. "It's a similar system to PDS and SNASM whereby all the development of, say, an Amiga game is done on a PC," he continues. "It's not that the Amiga isn't capable of being a development machine (some game devs used Amigas to cross-develop for some console titles), but if the game you're writing opts to crash, it'll take the whole machine with it, which could potentially ruin a project as some crashes can be rather unpredictable, wiping out source code and damaging disks."

As a result of this instability, developers would typically program and assemble source code on a PC, using an interface cable/card between the PC and Amiga once the game was ready for playtesting. "The PsyQ system is part-hardware and takes over the Amiga to allow downloading of the game to the Amiga from the PC," continues Phill. "It then activates the game on the Amiga for playtesting. PsyQ can interrupt the Amiga and stop the game – it just makes development easier and faster. When you consider that when the A500 was first released, hard drives for them were expensive and not very big, whereas PC's hard drives were the norm and a lot cheaper and bigger, and generally the PC could assemble source code into 68000 machine code faster ▶



MORE MISSING AMIGA GEMS

Putty Squad isn't the only Amiga game to go missing in action…

SNOW BROS

STATUS: RELEASED



■ This stunning conversion was by Ocean France and was coded by Pierre Adane. Pierre was responsible for the excellent Amiga conversion of *Pang*, and *Snow Bros* is equally impressive, featuring stunningly accurate levels, brilliant animation and super-tight gameplay. The Amiga version was discovered in 2006 and Denis Lechevalier (DLFRSilver) was involved with its release.

LIQUID KIDS

STATUS: RELEASED



■ This delightful platformer by Taito is another Ocean France Amiga game that never saw the light of day. An English Amiga Board member called The Wolf tracked down the original code in 2003 and it's now available to play. Coded by Michel Janicki and Pierre-Eric Loriaux, with graphics by Thierry Levastre, it's another solid platformer. It's not quite up to the standard of *Snow Bros*, but it remains a very competent conversion.

GORE

STATUS: UNRELEASED



■ Unlike several games covered here, *Gore* was never released; in fact it's unlikely that it was even finished. So why is it spoken about in such revered tones within the Amiga community? Simple; it was the brainchild of DMA's Dave Jones, who had released popular shooters *Blood Money* and *Menace* and would go on to mastermind *Grand Theft Auto*. Originally planned as a technically impressive scrolling beat-'em-up, *Gore* was eventually scrapped in favour of *Lemmings*.

HOSTILE BREED

STATUS: RELEASED



■ *Hostile Breed* was another game that received positive reviews back in the day – 66 to 84 per cent across seven magazines – but never received an actual release. Fortunately, programmer Rob Stevens had kept hold of the Amiga floppy disks and it was eventually released into the Amiga community after Amiga Games That Weren't contacted him. An interesting take on the shoot-'em-up genre.

SON SHU-SHI

STATUS: RELEASED



■ *Son Shu-Shi* started off on the Atari ST. The original authors of the cancelled Amiga port revealed to Amiga Point Of View fanzine that the source code and binaries had been destroyed. Luckily Patrick Tamine, who had been helping out on the game, read the news and came to the rescue with the two-disk runtime version he still owned. Several people in the community (including Ian) ensured a WHDLoad version was made available.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN TWIDDY

We were keen to find out how Putty Squad's original developer felt about the long-overdue release

What's it like seeing Amiga *Putty Squad* in action after all this time?
It is great to see it up and running again. It was a bit of a shock looking at the low resolution compared with what we have become used to on modern consoles. I also found it quite difficult to get used to the old controls. Nowadays we are used to having so many buttons and controls on a joystick whereas, in those days, it was a matter of crow-barring all the functionality into a single button. It made me realise just how many aspects of the original game have slowly been changed over the past year in the new incarnations.

How much work have you had to do with the project?
Most of my involvement was involved in finding the files in the first place. Ever since the game was first written I had the source code and original data files, but in recent months we were desperately searching old hard drives to find the actual mastering files. When the game was originally created, I used to have an Amiga hard drive, which automatically wrote out the files in the correct order to disk. Unfortunately when I eventually found this drive in my loft, mildew and age had taken its toll and it no longer even turned. Therefore the problem was finding copies of these mastering files on an old PC hard drive. I have been through a lot of PCs in my career and still have all of the old drives so it was a very long-winded process. However, once they were found, Phill did all the hard work of installing an alternative disk system and loader to read/write them to disk.

How does the mastering process of today compare to the Amiga days?
I have to confess to being ignorant of where the Amiga community had moved on to nowadays. And whilst I have become aware of some elements from speaking to Phill, I can't admit to being in the know even now. I have to say I did used to like the simplicity of working with the Amiga system in the old days.

How do you hope people will respond to the release?
We were very keen to keep the game as it was originally intended and therefore hope that people will enjoy the original style of gameplay. We are very aware that tastes, styles and expectations have changed over the past 20 years. However, I have been blown away by the hundreds of people who have bothered to take the time to thank us for giving the game away. Many people, including those who do not like Facebook and have used the Contact Us page on the website. All the work seems worthwhile when you realise the number of people who were looking forward to the game. I hope it lives up to their expectations and memories.



» [Amiga] Later levels get incredibly hard, so you'll need all your putty skills to survive.



» John Twiddy is extremely pleased that so many Amiga owners can enjoy his game.

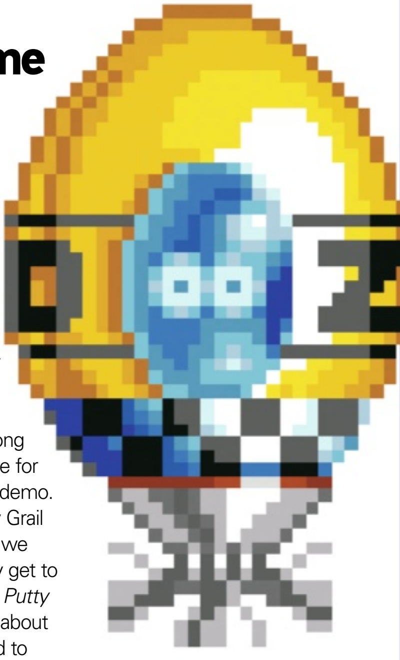
than the Amiga could. Lots of development teams used these systems, some used custom-made setups, others simply did development on the target machine, and others did it all from floppy disk drives which just sounds mental now!"

There were more issues buried within the 20-year-old code that John Twiddy had first created two decades previously, and *Putty Squad* was proving itself to be time-consuming work. Luckily, Phill was equally up to the task, revealing that getting rid of all the hard-coded debug information was certainly a tricky job, but not an impossible one. "When John made his final assembly, there were *lots* of in-game functions that could be accessed for debugging purposes, which clearly could not be left in the game," he explains. "Some of John's equate functions didn't cover all of the debugging code, so it wasn't just a case of clearing a few address locations to switch off these debugging features; they had to be manually removed, which then caused other parts of the game that were essential to not work. It wasn't much of an obstacle, but John put *lots* of debugging stuff in there so I had lots of functions to remove and do it so it didn't affect the game."

Unfortunately for Phill it wasn't just a case of sorting out the PsyQ system and the rest of *Putty Squad*'s source code, as System 3 was adamant that the game had to be compatible for anyone who wanted to play it on a base Amiga 1200. The only problem was that Phill lacked a machine and lacked the time to create the relevant hard drive installer that was needed. Step forward Ian Lightbody of the popular Amiga fansite Codetapper.com, who was aware of *Putty Squad*'s resurrection and had the required computer.

"It was absolutely vital to test the game on a physical Amiga 1200 because emulators





> **"It was absolutely vital to test the game on a physical Amiga 1200"**
> Ian Lightbody

have so many options to increase the speed and power beyond what the real hardware can do," explains Ian of the need to test the game on native hardware. "The Amiga relies on exact timing in many areas, and the WinUAE emulator can be more forgiving to software that doesn't quite follow the rules."

Ian set to work with his playtesting and immediately ran into his first problem. The game didn't seem to be loading, despite not showing the usual error message that would appear, leading Ian to believe that the disk was actually faulty and had bad sectors. "Most of the popular disk writing programs on the Amiga write to the disk without checking it was successful, and if the disk makes all the normal sounds then there's no real reason to suspect anything was wrong," explains Ian. "I began to suspect the disk was faulty, and tried about 40 different floppies before I found one without errors and successfully wrote the game back to disk. I informed a very happy Galahad that it had loaded perfectly on all configurations, despite the five-minute task taking the best part of an hour!"

Realising that many other users would be in the same boat, Ian modified his disk writing software so that it included a verify option, while Phill added instructions about fresh disks and using write verification. Ian wasn't finished however, as he needed to create a hardware installer, which was a critical part of the process. Fortunately, it was pretty straightforward, partly due to Phill designing his code so that it simplified the process and also because *Putty Squad* was extremely similar in structure to the original seven-level demo, which Ian had already written an installer for.

"The first task was to extract all the data off the two disks, and that took several iterations before we were happy with it," reveals Ian about the time-consuming process. "We found a couple of bugs in the disk ripping software and managed to work around them while still making the file extraction process as fast as possible. I was actually able to begin work on the hard drive version before the second disk had even been mastered, as Galahad told me in advance about his (cunning) plan for storing the files on the second disk without it requiring its own directory structure."

After a couple of weeks of hard, secretive work under NDAs, *Putty Squad* made its Christmas Eve deadline and was released to ecstatic fans. It's been a difficult journey for the people involved, but ultimately Mark Cale feels it was all worth it. "I hope that people appreciate that all along we wanted to be able to make it available in one form or another," explains Mark, who refers to the last couple of months as "a rollercoaster". "John always maintained that he had the files somewhere, but it was a bit of a blow when it turned out to be more work than we realised to get it to work. It all came together though, and we gave the community what they wanted and released the Amiga game for free for Christmas. We could have charged for it but I felt that was the wrong way to reward people's passion and love for the game they played so long ago as a demo. Some people call *Putty Squad* the Holy Grail of gaming; the ultimate rare game, and we were determined that they would finally get to experience it. I hope that the release of *Putty Squad* shows that System 3 does care about the Amiga community and that we tried to give something back. More importantly, I feel it shows that we all have the same thing in common – a passion for great games."

Special thanks to System 3 and the members of the Amiga community who all helped with *Putty Squad*'s Amiga release. Additional thanks to Adrian Simpson of Amiga Lore and Mike Dailly for their assistance with this feature.



» [PS Vita] *Putty Squad* is already out on PS4 and will be on Vita, Wii U and other formats shortly. Expect a review soon.



» [Amiga] Later levels have deadly drops, so items like this balloon become incredibly useful.

Minority Report

The Acorn Archimedes was the machine that replaced the BBC Micro in schools across the UK. While known for being a more serious machine, it could also play games – Kieren Hawken discovers some of its more obscure titles





» [Archimedes] *Star Fighter 3000* has a really slick intro sequence.

STAR FIGHTER 3000

■ DEVELOPER: FEDNET SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1994

■ ***Star Fighter 3000* first came to prominence when it was released for the 3DO in 1996 (which also used an ARM RISC chip).** It received rave reviews all round and was soon converted over to the PC, Saturn and PlayStation the year after. However, not many people know that it was originally a game for Acorn's 32-bit home computer and one of the most impressive games on the system.

A mission-based open-world space shooter, the worlds around you are a stunning mix of flat-shaded and texture-mapped polygons. The object of each level usually revolves around destroying a set of ground-based targets. Each of these missions starts with a map screen that plots out the level in front of you. Each world is huge compared to similar games and there are an incredible 108 of them! Being a 3D game, one of the key features of *Star Fighter 3000* is the ability to change the camera angles and the viewpoint from third-person to cockpit. Looking around your ship becomes a key part of the game when you are being chased by enemies or looking for targets. Your ship is equipped with standard guns and missiles but your weapons



» FIREBALL II

■ DEVELOPER: CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL ■ YEAR: 1990

■ **Every single system** out there has a clone of *Breakout* or *Arkanoid*, and the Archimedes is not alone. The classic bat and ball gameplay of Atari's 1976 arcade game was later improved greatly by Taito with the addition of power-ups and different brick formations. *Fireball II* follows the exact same formula as the *Arkanoid* titles and allows you to play with a mouse giving far more sensitive controls. One nice feature of this title over the Taito game, though, is the ability to combine power-ups, for example you can have both lasers and a big bat at the same time! This remains to be a great arcade game for the Acorn Archimedes.



» BLOWPIPE

■ DEVELOPER: ECLIPSE ■ YEAR: 1995

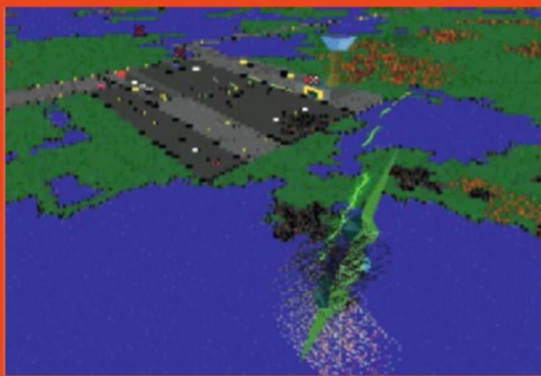
■ **Eclipse is best** known for the *Iron Soldier* games on the Jaguar and PlayStation or the *Wings Of Death* games on the Amiga and ST, but not many people are aware that it also published Archimedes games. Like the *Wings Of Death* games, this is another title that shows its shoot-'em-up pedigree. A horizontally-scrolling affair, *Blowpipe* is reminiscent of Konami's *Nemesis* and *Salamander*. The cavernous levels, long screen and enemies all owe a lot to the classic arcade games. *Blowpipe* uses an energy bar rather than just a 'one hit and you're dead' system though, which is fortunate given how many enemies there are on-screen.



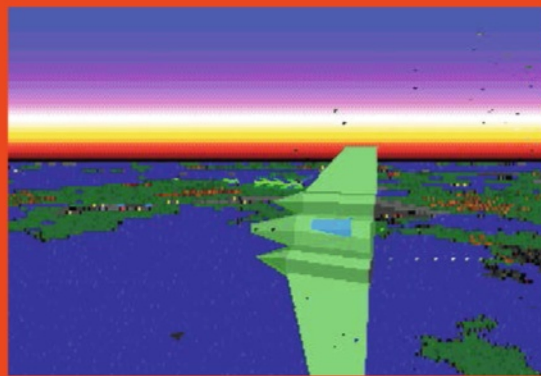
» MR DOO

■ DEVELOPER: STEPHEN KETT ■ YEAR: 1991

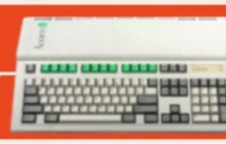
■ **We are sure** you have already guessed by the title but this is a pretty much straight-up clone of Universal's fantastic 1982 arcade game *Mr Do!*. Instead of a clown though, you now control a wizard, but the core gameplay is exactly the same – to clear each level of the cherries and not get caught by the enemies. The only real additions to the game are the power-ups that can be collected. These help you turn the tables on the enemy and complete levels quicker. *Mr Doo* has lovely colourful graphics, great digitised sound and addictive gameplay that will keep this game right at the front of your disk box.



» [Archimedes] An enemy missile sends you to a watery grave.



» [Archimedes] *Star Fighter 3000* features some impressive 3D graphics.



» ABOUT ACORN ARCHIMEDES

- The Archimedes was the first machine to feature an ARM chip, now found in pretty much every mobile phone and tablet!
- There were a number of different hardware revisions, from the ST/Amiga-like A3000 up to the PC-based A7000.
- The best games on the Acorn machine were mostly ST/Amiga ports such as *Xenon 2*, *Cannon Fodder* and *Lemmings*. Rotherham-based Krisalis Software was responsible for nearly all of these.

can be upgraded as the game goes along. Some of the later missions in the game involve you guiding whole squadrons of ships, protecting your own bases and working as a courier. The levels vary really nicely and you can have a little practice of the game to get the hang of the controls before being thrown straight into the action. Another nice feature of *Star Fighter 3000* is the ability to configure the controls as you wish to keyboard, joystick, mouse and various combinations of each. Humour is also a big part of the game, and some of the mission descriptions are hilarious. One of the enemy warlords you are trying to destroy "likes to dress up in a squirrel costume and play conkers in his spare time". In fact, you are later asked to replenish his conker supply or else!

Star Fighter 3000 has a big following in the Acorn community and, with help from the original programmers Andrew Hutchings and Tim Parry – who also wrote *Chocks Away* and *Stunt Car 2000* – the game has had many upgrades made to it over the years. There has even been an updated version of the game made for the RISC PC-based machines with vastly improved graphics and even more additional features. One of the nicest things to come about is a level editor that can be downloaded and used to make your own stages for the game! And another cool addition to the game has been a little program that allows you to add your own MP3-based music. There are few games over the years that have been embraced by their respective communities like *Star Fighter 3000* has been on the Archimedes. It is easy to see why this title is regarded by many as the best game released for the Acorn machine.



» [Archimedes] The map screen is very useful because the levels are huge!



» BUG HUNTER IN SPACE

■ DEVELOPER: MINERVA ■ YEAR: 1992

■ **This unique little** arcade adventure for the Archimedes reminded us a lot of the games that Codemasters used to put out back in the day like *Dizzy* and *Cosmic Spacehead*. Its combination of cute graphics and puzzle-orientated gameplay is a real hark back to those classic games. The unique feature of this game is the gravity system that means our hero walks up walls and across ceilings in what becomes a key part of the game. You must work out the best way to get around each level using this method and avoid the bad guys looking to stop you. The original *Bug Hunter* game is also well worth seeking out too.



» ENIGMA

■ DEVELOPER: ARCHIMEDES WORLD ■ YEAR: 1993

■ ***Enigma* reminded us** a lot of the Taito arcade game *Plotting*. This puzzler requires you to match up blocks by the symbols that appear on them. You do this by shifting each block left or right without getting trapped. Sometimes you have three of the same block and this requires some very skilful planning in order to get them all to successfully match up at the same time. As the levels go on you will find cunning traps, lifts and blocks that cannot be moved out of the way. *Enigma* is one of the most addictive games for the Acorn Archimedes and will provide you with hours and hours of hair-pulling fun.



» IXION

■ DEVELOPER: SOFTWARE 42 ■ YEAR: 1992

■ **Anyone remember the** *Freescape* series by Domark? Vast 3D romps like *Total Eclipse* and *Driller* that required you to explore and solve puzzles in equal measure. Well, *Ixion* is much like an updated version of those games. You are roaming a vast polygon world that is seeped in radioactivity. As you explore this alien world you must watch out for the patrol ships and guards that want to take you down. The map will help you find your way around and your laser weapon will assist you against the enemy. Can you discover why these mysterious beings want you dead and escape this eerie alien world intact?

Minority Report



E-TYPE

■ DEVELOPER: THE FOURTH DIMENSION ■ YEAR: 1989



» [Archimedes] What are these policemen doing in the Arctic?



» [Archimedes] C'mon own up, who put that there?

■ **Although clearly inspired by Sega's classic arcade game *OutRun*, *E-Type* was one of the first truly great games for Acorn's computer and still holds up very well today.** As you can probably guess from the title the car in this game, rather than being an Italian Ferrari Testarossa, is a classic British Jaguar E-Type. But you are still joined by a beautiful female friend on your journey round the world. One interesting feature of *E-Type* is that it uses mouse control with the three buttons representing the clutch, brake and accelerator – thereby mimicking a real car. This control method works really well and feels very natural and intuitive. The tracks all take place in different countries, all with their own hazards such as the ice in Antarctica and the sand dunes in the African desert.

In addition to the actual game, The Fourth Dimension also released a separate track editor, that works much like the one in *Lotus Turbo Challenge 2*, and allows you to put your own self-created courses into the game. A sequel was also released a few years later that added a two-player split-screen mode (with your girlfriend driving a pink Jag!), tunnels, multiple routes and more extreme weather conditions. This was followed by the *E-Type* compendium, which put both versions of the game and the track editor in one handy package. The *E-Type* series provides the best racing experience on the Archimedes and should be in every owner's collection.

» MOON QUAKE

■ DEVELOPER: PAUL TAYLOR ■ YEAR: 1992

■ Every system needs a *Bomberman* clone and this is the best one for the Arc. Set in space, it has all the usual power-ups and multiplayer that you would expect.

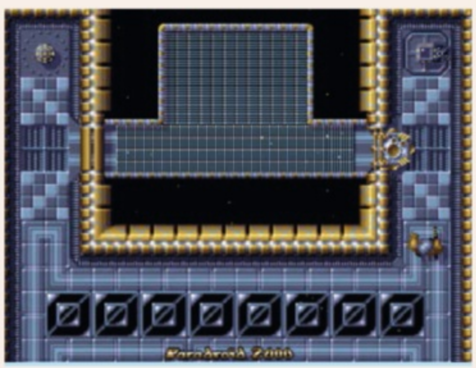


» BLITZ

■ DEVELOPER: ARXE SYSTEMS ■ YEAR: 1991

■ Another great arcade clone for the Arc, this time we have a very playable rip-off of Capcom's *Pang* that features some really nice digitised backdrops and sound effects.





» PARADROID 2000

■ DEVELOPER: COIN AGE ■ YEAR: 1993

■ **Andrew Braybrook's *Paradroid*** is considered by many as being the best game for the Commodore 64. It was later updated as *Paradroid '90* for the Atari ST and Amiga and this even newer version for the Archimedes is heavily based on that sequel. The game plays exactly the same way as you guide your droid around the spaceship destroying all the enemy robots in your way. This plays every bit as good as any of the other versions of the game and has the added benefits of superior graphics and sound, which are even upgraded over the Amiga version. This is right up there with the best games on the system.



» TOP BANANA

■ DEVELOPER: HEX ■ YEAR: 1991

■ **Some Amiga and** ST fans out there will remember this game as a blatant rip-off of *Rainbow Islands.* Well not many people know that the game originated on the Archimedes and it's definitely the definitive version of the game with its superior graphics and sound. The gameplay here is very similar to Taito's game, there is no doubt about that, but that is surely a good thing because *Top Banana* is also a great deal of fun. You can't help but admire the stunning visuals and digitised sounds as you jump your way to the top of each level, defeating the bad guys and collecting the fruit as you go.



» SUPER POOL

■ DEVELOPER: FOURTH DIMENSION ■ YEAR: 1991

■ **Fourth Dimension is** really starting to dominate this feature, but you can certainly see why – the quality of its games speaks for itself, and it seems the company can turn its hand to just about any genre. *Super Pool* is a realistic 3D interpretation of the popular pub sport that is reminiscent of *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker.* In fact there is also a snooker version of this game called *Break 147* that is even more like Archer MacLean's classic. With practice, tournament and multiplayer modes alongside other game options, this offering couldn't be more comprehensive. It's almost as good as playing the real thing!

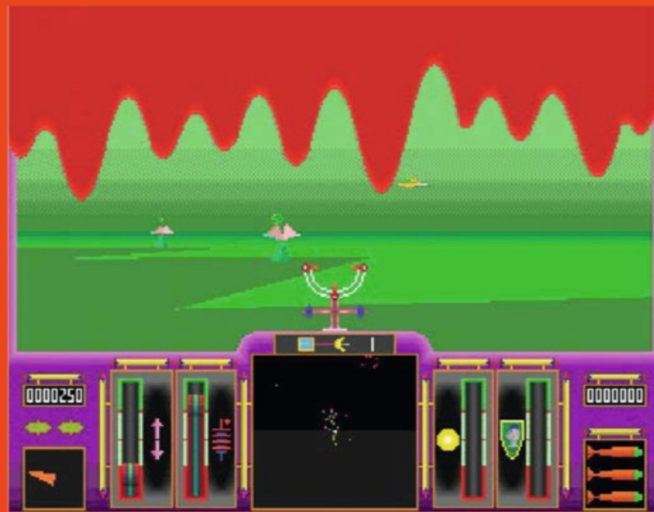
APOCALYPSE

■ DEVELOPER: THE FOURTH DIMENSION ■ YEAR: 1990

■ **Following the common theme of Archimedes games generally being inspired by more famous games from the arcades, *Apocalypse* is basically Atari's classic *Battlezone* on steroids.** The game sees you trying to cleanse a series of planets of the Rakonans – a sentient computer lifeform that has grown out of control and taken over the galaxy. The enemy forces are both ground and air-based so you will need to keep moving to avoid enemy fire. Thankfully you have some very useful missiles to take out the enemy ships attacking you from above and your laser cannons will make quick word of the ground-based foes. Like *Battlezone*, an on-screen radar will help you track down the alien installations and clear the levels much quicker. Your tanks shields will also help prevent the enemy from taking you out instantly. This is important as you get to select what part of the warzone you land in and this means you can quickly find yourself under attack.

Graphically, *Apocalypse* is a real tour-de-force with its smooth flat-shaded polygons, vibrant colours and slick presentation. The game's engine also moves quickly too, meaning the game is not as slow-paced as many similar 3D tank games. We should probably mention the sound too, as *Apocalypse* features some rocking music to accompany the arcade-quality effects.





» [Archimedes] Now where is the button for the windscreen wipers?

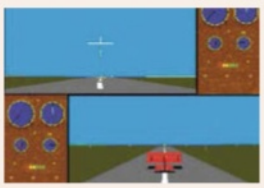


» [Archimedes] Enemy fire incoming, employ evasive manoeuvres!

» CHOCKS AWAY

■ DEVELOPER: THE FOURTH DIMENSION ■ YEAR: 1990

■ One of the best multiplayer games on the system, *Chocks Away* is a WW1 air combat game that uses some very slick 3D polygon graphics to set the scene.



» TALISMAN

■ DEVELOPER: MINERVA ■ YEAR: 1989

■ If you want a change from the arcade action on the Arc and fancy something a bit deeper then the sprawling arcade adventure *Talisman* will be right up your street.





» HAMSTERS

■ DEVELOPER: GAMESWARE ■ YEAR: 1994

■ **If you thought** *Dino Saw* was crazy then wait until you see this follow up! Tom Cooper has a reputation for programming madcap games for the Archimedes, and this is possibly the most mental of them all. You control the titular hamster, a furry little fellow armed with an enormous mallet! He uses this giant hammer to smash all his rival pets as he makes his way round the levels. Some of the other animals take multiple hits, like the tortoise whose hard shell takes several hits to crack, but others like the cat will just explode into a pool of blood and guts. *Hamsters* is every bit as cute as it is gory!



» ALERION

■ DEVELOPER: FELIX ■ YEAR: 1994

■ **Remember the 1983** Namco arcade game *Xevious*? Well *Alerion* for the Archimedes is almost exactly the same game! They copied everything here from the firing system – one button for a ground shot and one for air – to the spinning metallic baddies and lush green landscapes. It does give you more range for your shots than *Xevious* did though, making it a bit more forgiving. There aren't many shooters for the Arc so this game is a very welcome addition to the library. Interestingly, *Alerion* has been recently converted to iOS, which you could call the modern version of the Archimedes with its ARM-based technology!



» CASTLE BLACK HEART

■ DEVELOPER: JAMES WATSON ■ YEAR: 1991

■ ***Gauntlet* is arguably** one of the best arcade games of all time so it's only right that the Archimedes also got a clone of the Atari classic. In fact it has several (also see *White Magic* 1&2), but *Castle Black Heart* is our favourite. The idea of the game is exactly the same – to make your way through the dungeons, collect the treasure, grab the keys to open doors and eat the food to stay alive! One difference from *Gauntlet* though is that in this game you can't destroy the enemy generators. This means you have a constant supply of bad guys trying to duff you up and the impetus is definitely there to keep on moving!



RETROREVIVAL

The Story Of Thor

ELEMENTAL SPIRITS EVERYWHERE, BUT NO NORSE GODS

» **Mega Drive**
» **Ancient**
» **1995**

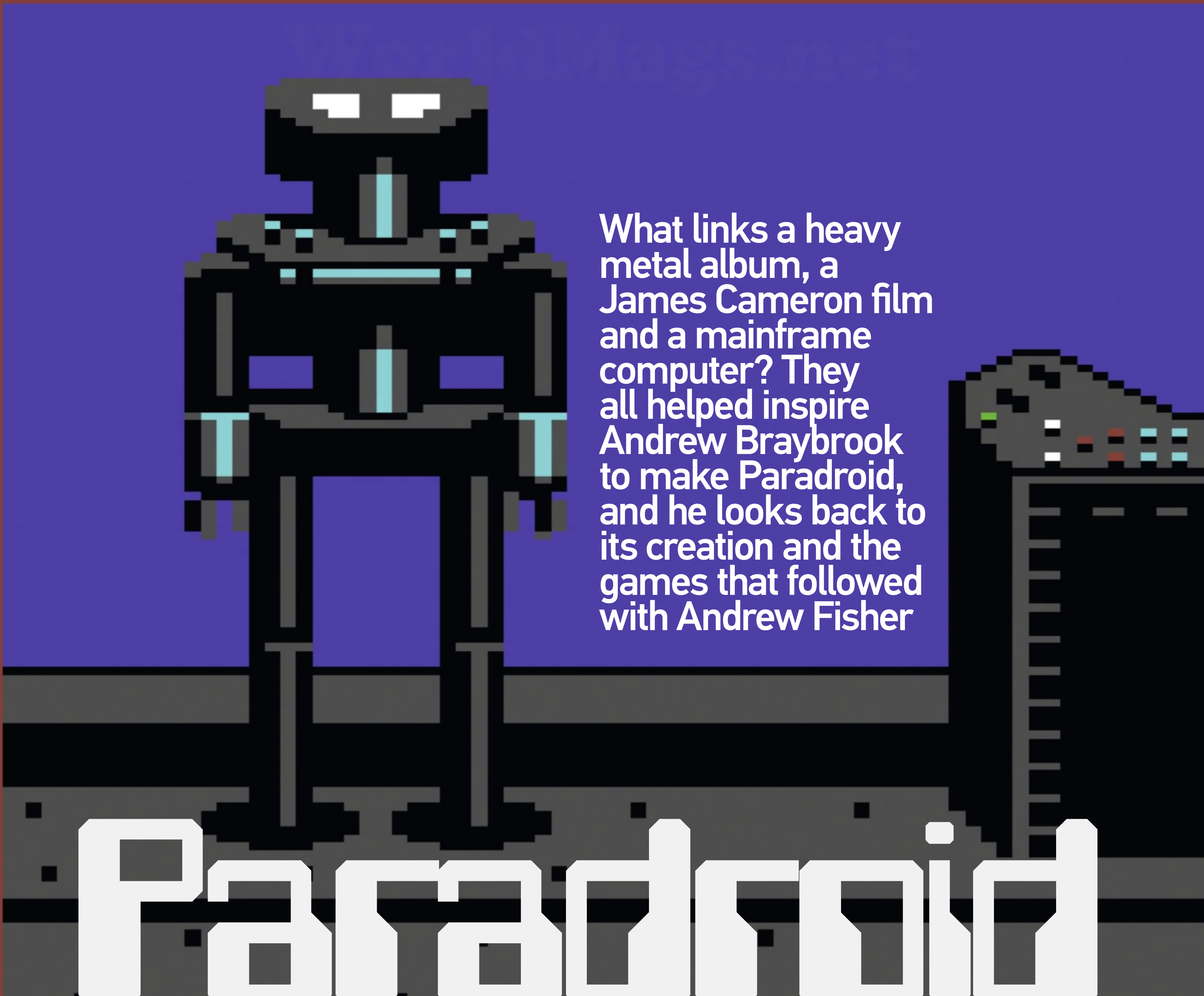
RPGs are a problem in Europe. As notoriously text-heavy releases in a region with multiple languages, they present a daunting and costly challenge for any localisation team. Perhaps for this reason, the UK missed a lot of the key console RPGs of the early Nineties – *Final Fantasy VI, Lunar: The Silver Star* and even *Super Mario RPG* never reached these shores.

It's for this reason that my first RPG was *The Story Of Thor* (or *Beyond Oasis*, in the North American market). A visually impressive late Mega Drive release, the game was the perfect introduction to the genre for a console kid used to the immediacy of arcade conversions. With active combat that is often compared to the *Zelda* series and less dialogue to contend with, I was free to enjoy the thrill of exploring the game's vast environments.

Revisiting the game with a lot more experience, I was pleased to find that *The Story Of Thor* is still worth playing today. The key to this is the summoning system, which sets it apart from other titles in the genre. The protagonist Ali is able to summon spirits by blasting the environment with his magic armlet, the most impressive being a fire spirit able to bathe the world in flame.

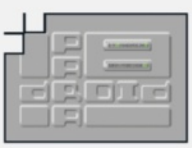
But the real thrill was finding that the boss battles lived up to my memories, with gigantic multi-sprite monstrosities filling the screen at the end of each dungeon. Nearly two decades on, defeating them still makes me feel like a hero. *





What links a heavy metal album, a James Cameron film and a mainframe computer? They all helped inspire Andrew Braybrook to make Paradroid, and he looks back to its creation and the games that followed with Andrew Fisher

Paradroid

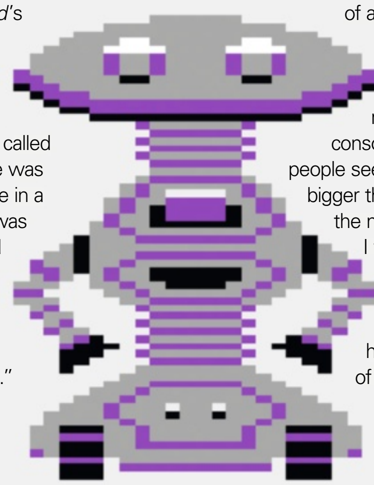


IN THE KNOW

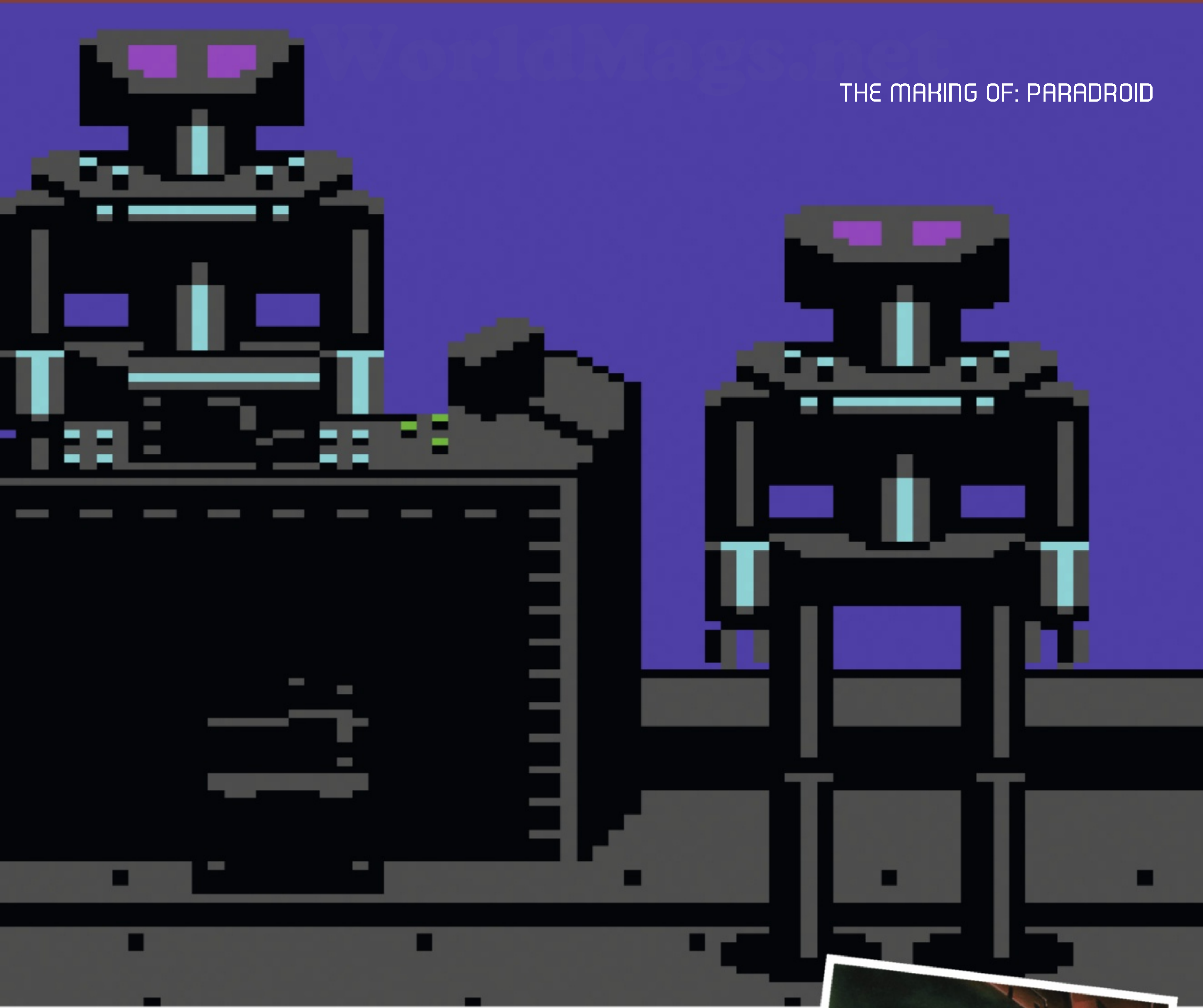
- » **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON
- » **DEVELOPER:** GRAFTGOLD
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PLATFORM:** C64
- » **GENRE:** PUZZLE

Andrew Braybrook started *Paradroid* after finishing *Gribbly's Day Out*. "It was our practice to print out the final version of the code and then add comments. It wasn't practical to waste disk space on comments in the code while writing the game so we'd spend two or three days adding notes to the code on paper. We'd also go to the launch of the game, usually at a bar in London, and maybe visit one or two offices to promote the game to the magazines. We didn't take a big break between games, there was a momentum to keep up." One of those visits had an important outcome. "That all happened when we took *Gribbly's* to *Zzap!* Towers in Ludlow. They liked it, and Chris Anderson was keen to do something like a diary for the next game, and we thought that might be fun and not too intrusive. I just wrote a paragraph every evening on the events of the day. I used to plan out what I was going to do that day on the walk to Steve's house, and that was all the planning I needed."

Andrew reveals *Paradroid*'s main inspiration. "The game was originally based on a COBOL game I had written on the mainframe six years earlier, called *Survive*. The objective there was to be the last player left alive in a multi-level environment. It was a multiplayer game and had two computer-controlled assassins, so the players used to gang up on them to take them out first and then battle it out to the end."



Paradroid's distinctive look used an overhead view with robots depicted as their serial number. "The animation of Gribbly showed me that I could animate sprites and save a lot of bytes. Top-down games tend to need at least eight directions of animations and that was going to be too expensive. So I figured that if I showed the robots bigger in the console lookup system to let people see the robots side-on and bigger then they might accept the numbers on the disks. I was also influenced by the cover of the Black Sabbath album *Technical Ecstasy*, as it had line-drawn blueprints of two robots." The cover



showed two robots 'interfacing'; the lyric sheet had the blueprints.

"I had tried to draw some real ship graphics but found it difficult to get a good look in multi-coloured graphics mode. I tried single-colour mode and that dictated a scale of the graphics that also didn't suit trying to look real, so the whole idea of the game being a radar-driven map was born. Quite possibly the movie *Aliens* had an influence on the look," says Andrew. One routine made things complicated. "The robot graphics are only shown on-screen if they would be visible by line of sight from the player, another *Survive* feature. The function to efficiently work that out was interesting to write with only three registers. We had the COBOL code to refer to, but it took a while to get that right. I also remember a mysterious crash which took me three days to find."

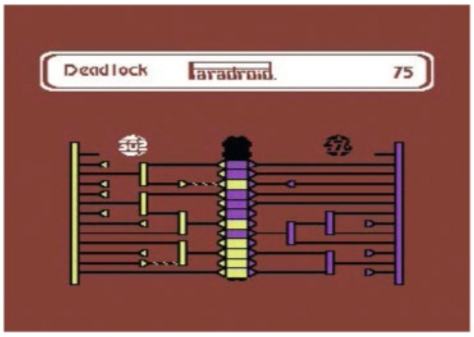
Interestingly, *Paradroid* was built around existing code that Andrew had available. "We usually did strip down the last game. Things like the scroll routine, sound player, input routines and movement routines would be saved, possibly tweaked and tested before starting the new game," he explains. "That bought a bit of time to think about designs. I had a book of fonts and had inherited a multi-character printing system from *Gribbly's* that allowed me to make letters out of two characters high graphics, or 2x2 for capital letters. I needed a more futuristic font and set about drawing one from the book. I had bought a couple of editors for the sprites and character sets; that made life a lot easier as it was quicker to create the graphics." Lots of paper was used during production. "We did write a lot of stuff down, diagrams, formulae, that kind of thing, as we were just coding with the Spectrum and the C64, and they weren't well suited to loading up multiple applications at once. So a pad of paper was always handy." ▶



» Oli Frey's original artwork for issue seven of *Zzap!* (with thanks to Roger Kean).



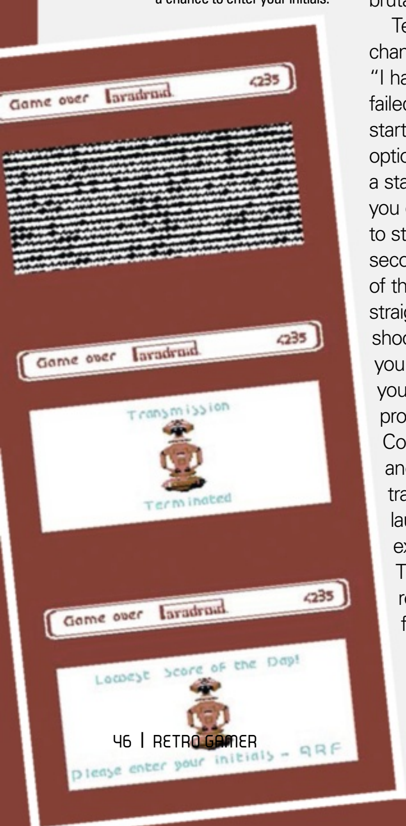
» [C64] The re-worked graphics of Heavy Metal *Paradroid*, released on the Rack-It budget label.



» [C64] This transfer game is deadlocked at six-all, the player must try again on a new layout.



» [C64] The lights go out when all the robots on a deck have been dealt with.



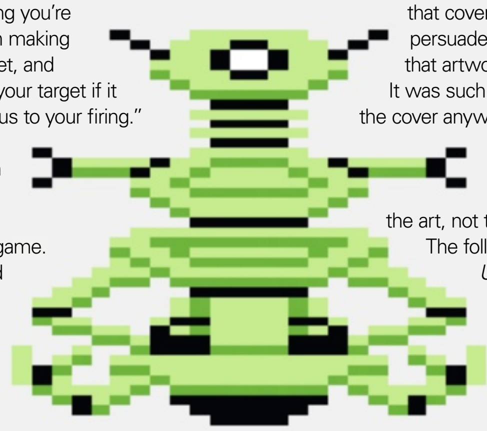
» [C64] Game over. Static, the Command Cyborg as transmission is terminated, and a chance to enter your initials.

The 24 robot types had a small portrait shown when the consoles were accessed. "I had a budget for the number of sprites available, so I set about designing a system to reflect images in multi-colour left to right to save images, and there is some re-use. I wanted to group them by the top digit of the three-figure ID number, and having about three different robots per series seemed about right. I had to vary the features of the robots with speed and weaponry and that tended to suggest designs." Class 883 was familiar to viewers of *Doctor Who*. "I'm a big fan, it was just a nod to [the Daleks]. That became a bit trickier when I wanted to put them into the 16-bit version. We did draw the full graphics but bottled it at the 11th hour and changed them. I had also done a Dalek game for the mainframe, just with letters for graphics, so I had a fondness for the movement and the brutality of them."

Testing feedback changed the controls. "I had a couple of failed control modes, all to do with firing. I started with a separate gunsight that you optionally move about. But whilst it could hit a static target quite easily, there was no way you could hit a moving target, and you had to stop moving so you're a sitting duck. The second method had a floating gunsight in front of the player, but that meant you have to move straight at the thing you're shooting at; again making you an easy target, and you'll crash into your target if it proves impervious to your firing." Colliding with another robot in transfer mode launched the excellent sub-game. The player and robot fought for control of a circuit board. Success gave the player access to the new robot and failure destroyed the current robot – meaning game over if that was the Influence Device. "I needed a way of balancing the game so that it would be difficult to move too far up the hierarchy of robots in one go. The transfer game switches the emphasis from many against one to one-on-one in an instant. It just all came together and worked in one go. That doesn't happen all the time, but it just worked. Steve even used it again in one of his games."

There were eight Robo-freighters to conquer, starting with Paradroid – which gave the game its name. Itsnothardenuff, the last ship, repeated. "The ships still get harder, it's all algorithmic, but the layouts of all the ships are the same as the maps do take up a fair amount of space. Each map is made of 4x4 character blocks and the ship has 16 maps. I could only get to about the fourth ship, so I figured it was tough enough, and anyone who got through eight ships was going to be some kind of superhero."

"The end of my C64 games was also the end of the lone programmer era"
Andrew Braybrook, on the transition to 16-bit



Oliver Frey's striking *Zzap!* cover celebrated the Gold Medal review. "I didn't like our box art at all, it looked so toy-like, but the robot on that cover had power. I tried to persuade them to let us use that artwork but they wouldn't. It was such an honour to make the cover anyway, and the image was so good. The game graphics are supposed to aspire to the art, not the other way round." The following Christmas a *Uridium* and *Paradroid* double-pack launched, featuring the improved Competition Edition. Who was behind that? "The marketing department, I would suspect. Once the game has been out for a while then they try and mop up the non-believers with a bargain."

Returning was easy, thanks to those copious notes. "As long as you're still using the same development gear then you stay familiar with the process, so it's not so difficult." Andrew continued tweaking *Paradroid*, resulting in a third version. "The Heavy Metal edition came about as I was doing Morpheus about two years later. I wanted to try out the graphics look and *Paradroid* was sitting there – so I redrew every character in multi-colour mode in that style and switched the graphic mode over. I decided to use the style in *Morpheus* and I made some other speed tweaks in *Paradroid* and got it running at a higher frame rate, so I figured I should show everybody."

Steve Turner took inspiration from *Paradroid* (see Droid Dreams boxout) and Graftgold created a 16-bit sequel. "After we had done *Rainbow Islands* on the Amiga and Atari ST I was looking for a new title. We had a lot of the tools developed for the map building so it seemed a good fit for the code we had. Dominic Robinson had written a game core system that gave me a ready-made interface to the hardware." Was it an easy transition? "We were keen to write on 16-bit. The big transition was going from character-based backgrounds to bitmaps, which I had used on *Lunattack* and on the Dragon 32, and Steve had used on the Spectrum, so we knew what the plot routines had to do. The code was lovely; all those registers. It gave us a real freedom."

"The biggest change, and I didn't twig it at the time, was that the end of my C64 games was also the end of the lone programmer era. After that it was a team effort. I usually had someone else help out with the sound

WE ARE THE ROBOTS

These are the droids you are looking for



TYPE 101

■ The player starts off controlling the Influence Device, armed with a weak laser. Lose this and it's game over.



TYPE 123

■ The slow-moving disposal robot is very weak.



TYPE 139

■ This is another disposal robot that sweeps up after itself.



TYPE 247

■ This servant robot was one of the first to use an anti-grav system, but is not armed.



TYPE 249

■ You cannot see this three-legged robot walking, but it is slow.



TYPE 296

■ The tray on this robot's head is for carrying drinks.



TYPE 302

■ A faster-moving messenger designed to carry parcels.



TYPE 329

■ A small wheeled robot, it is unarmed and so the Influence Device's laser is used.



TYPE 420

■ The higher the robot's class, the more pulses available in the transfer game.



TYPE 476

■ This is the first robot with a strong single laser. Worth seeking out in the early stages.



TYPE 493

■ Another maintenance robot, this one carries its own toolbox.



TYPE 516

■ Usually found on the top decks of the ship, befitting its crew droid status.



TYPE 571

■ The crew droids may move quite quickly but have no armament of their own.



TYPE 598

■ Crew droids may also be fairly well armoured, taking multiple hits to kill.



TYPE 614

■ The first of the Sentinel droids, all armed with strong lasers.



TYPE 615

■ Moves slower than 615, but it is equipped with good sensors.



TYPE 629

■ The console describes an unseen variation with an autocannon instead of a laser.



TYPE 711

■ Battle droids are heavily armed and armoured. The small laser of the Influence Device will not damage them.



TYPE 742

■ Another tough battle droid, the disruptor's explosion flashes the whole screen black and white briefly and damages nearby robots.



TYPE 751

■ This battle droid became the face of the game, on Oli Frey's cover and the loading screens for later versions.



TYPE 821

■ Twin lasers and fast movement make this a formidable opponent.



TYPE 834

■ Another fast mover, so be on your guard around it.



TYPE 883

■ The dreaded 883 inspires fear in humans for some reason.

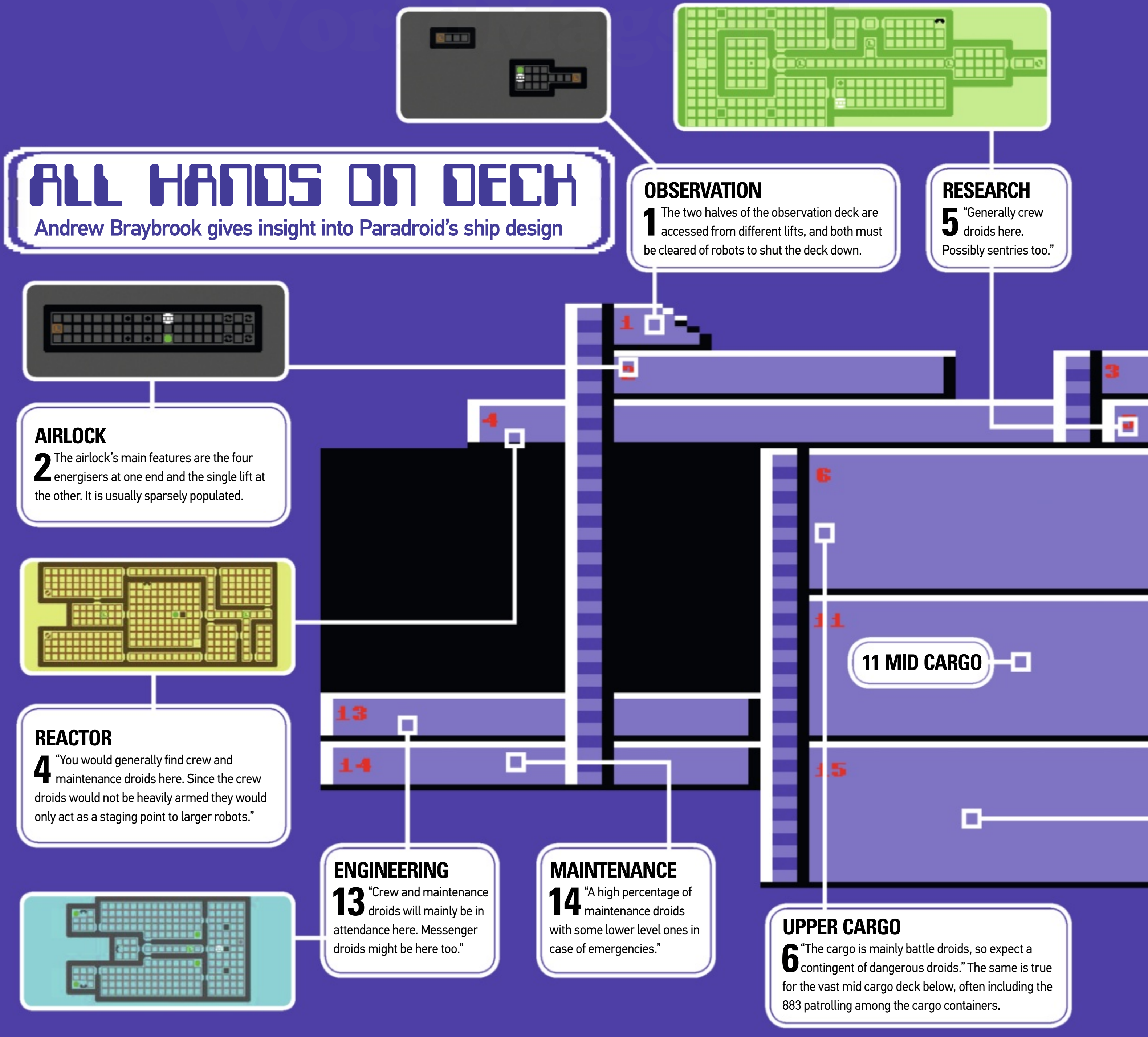


TYPE 999

■ The ultimate Command Cyborg can only be influenced for a short time before the player must seek a new host.

ALL HANDS ON DECK

Andrew Braybrook gives insight into Paradroid's ship design



effects and music, but apart from that I did the vast majority of the graphics and the coding. That gives you confidence in the code; you know exactly what is going on all the time. I did do some *Paradroid 90* graphics, but I had to become a team leader too." That team included Dominic Robinson and artists John Cumming, Michael Field and John W Lilley.

Jason Page created the sound. "When I started at Graftgold, I was mainly a programmer but moved into the audio side of things. For music, I'd write the original using NoiseTracker. I'd then type in all the data as hex into the Graftgold audio player code. After *Paradroid* I wrote a new sound routine and editor, which we used in future titles." Did the original influence him? "Oh yes. Hence there being lots of warbling sounds and such like. They were iconic C64 *Paradroid* sounds, so I wanted to keep those. It was important to keep the overall feel of the original."

Andrew explains why the decks scrolled vertically and abstract droids became proper graphics. "The ST wasn't keen on horizontal scrolling. We did have a full scrolling version on the ST, but it didn't look pretty enough. It took a lot of memory to prepare all the combinations of the graphics blocks. That decision didn't go down too well with the Amiga crowd! We had enough space to do the animations, and having 16 colours on-screen it seemed right to draw the graphics in a real style. We did try the blueprint style but it looked weak against some of the prettier games of the time."

The robot line-up changed, joined by new human raiders. "I wanted there to be some familiarity with the C64 content, it was a 16-bit implementation of the same game as far as I was concerned. The raiders were a mechanism to speed up progress towards the end of the ship when there aren't so many robots about. There was also a bonus pirate ship that you got at the end if you had completed all the ships and collected all of the Graftgold keys. It was only a small ship, but very tough."

Would Andrew have changed anything? "*Paradroid 90* was as good as it could have been. If we had done another Amiga version then it would have scrolled in all directions and run at 50 frames a second. There were difficulties so we'd have used a different publisher in hindsight." Andrew reveals Gary Foreman was close to completing a PC Engine version with a two-player mode; development was halted by Hewson's bankruptcy.

Paradroid 90 became *Paradroid 2000* on the Archimedes. "We just thought it sounded

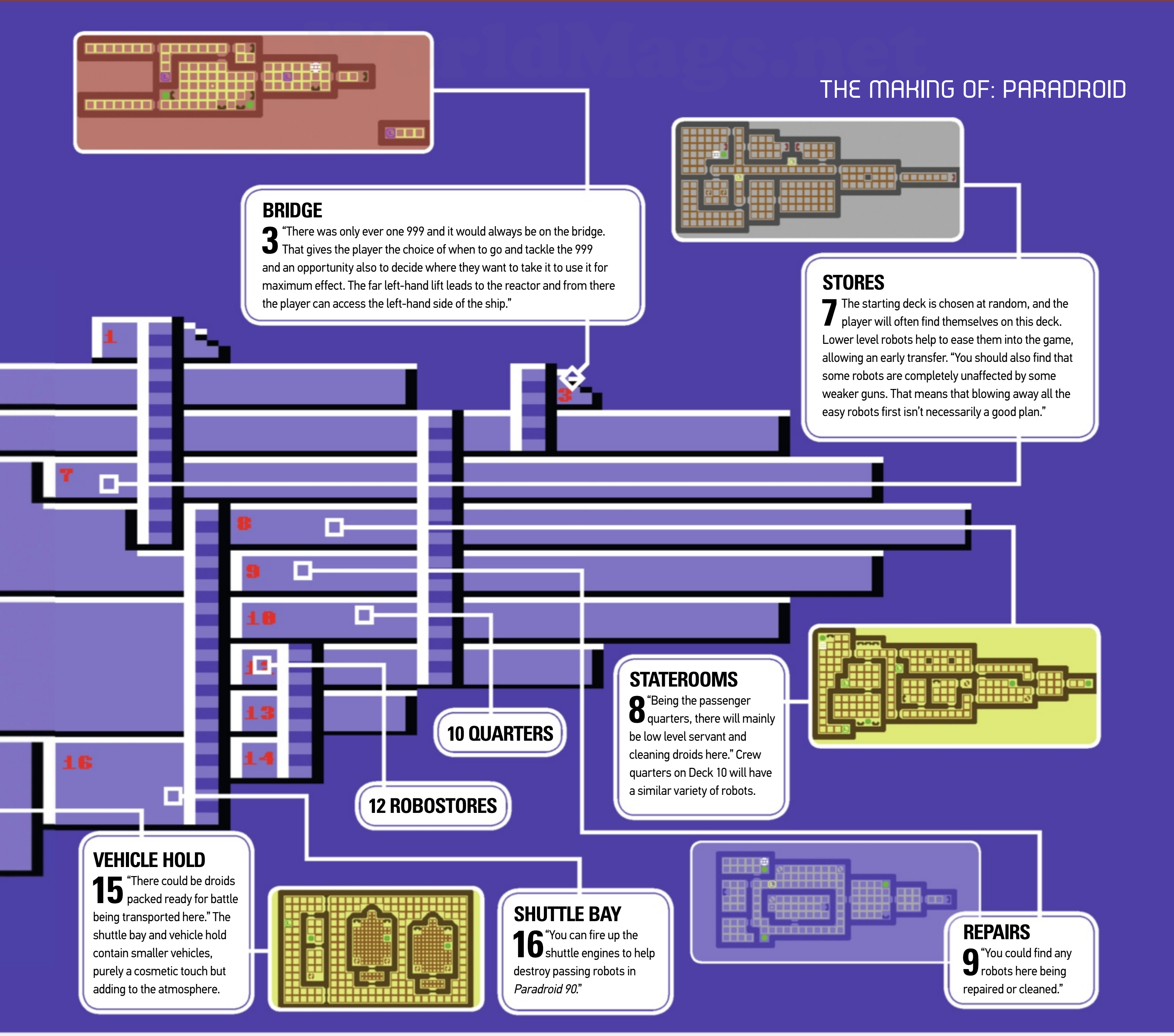


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

MORPHEUS
SYSTEM: C64
YEAR: 1987

INTENSITY
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: C64, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1988

URIDIUM 2
SYSTEM: AMIGA
YEAR: 1993



BRIDGE

3 "There was only ever one 999 and it would always be on the bridge. That gives the player the choice of when to go and tackle the 999 and an opportunity also to decide where they want to take it to use it for maximum effect. The far left-hand lift leads to the reactor and from there the player can access the left-hand side of the ship."

STORES

7 The starting deck is chosen at random, and the player will often find themselves on this deck. Lower level robots help to ease them into the game, allowing an early transfer. "You should also find that some robots are completely unaffected by some weaker guns. That means that blowing away all the easy robots first isn't necessarily a good plan."

STATEROOMS

8 "Being the passenger quarters, there will mainly be low level servant and cleaning droids here." Crew quarters on Deck 10 will have a similar variety of robots.

10 QUARTERS

12 ROBOSTORES

VEHICLE HOLD

15 "There could be droids packed ready for battle being transported here." The shuttle bay and vehicle hold contain smaller vehicles, purely a cosmetic touch but adding to the atmosphere.

SHUTTLE BAY

16 "You can fire up the shuttle engines to help destroy passing robots in *Paradroid 90*."

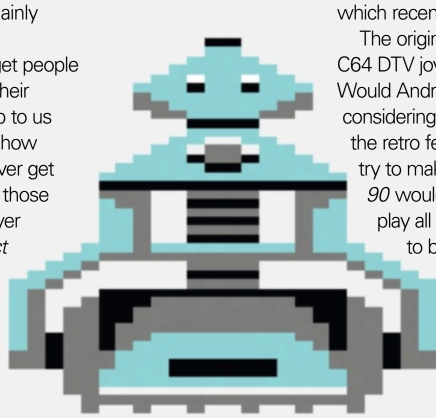
REPAIRS

9 "You could find any robots here being repaired or cleaned."

really futuristic. This was 1991 or 1992 and 2000 seemed a long way away," says Andrew Catling. "My childhood heroes were people like David Braben, Orlando, Geoff Crammond and Andrew Braybrook so it was a dream come true to make games. Coin-Age had a deal with Graftgold to convert their games to the Arc. I'd just finished *The Last Ninja* for Superior Software when they got in touch."

"The 68000 code was adapted from *Rainbow Islands*. I decided I'd rewrite everything from scratch rather than try to translate it. I wasn't familiar with 68000 but I could get the gist of how things worked and how the data for the different droids was used. I was quite pleased with the transfer game, as that was the first time I'd used recursion in ARM assembler and it was quite an elegant solution. It took three months to rewrite the whole thing. I didn't have a lot of graphics work to do as they were just ported from the Amiga." Does he still play *Paradroid*? "Luckily, some amazing archivers have managed to preserve all of my old games, so I've been playing them again recently. I think *Paradroid* still stands out as one of the best, mainly because of the timeless design."

Fans help *Paradroid* live on. "We get people asking if it's okay to do a remake for their university project, and it's not really up to us any more. I don't think people realise how much detail is in a game, so most never get completed," says Braybrook. Among those that were completed were a two-player Amiga PD version and Ovine's *Project Paradroid* on PC. *Paradroid Redux* by Jorma Oskanen is an ongoing C64 project, with a faster frame rate and bug fixes. Andrew notes, "I do hope he's talking about his own bug fixes, because I am not aware of any bugs in my code! The Heavy Metal edition was running at the improved 25 frames per second." Reinhard and Johannes Prix started the open-source Freedroid project, which recently launched on Android.



The original *Paradroid* appeared on the C64 DTV joystick and Wii's Virtual Console. Would Andrew himself ever go back? "I am considering writing something new that retains the retro feel of *Paradroid*. I would probably try to make it a shorter game as *Paradroid 90* would potentially take about 3 hours to play all the way through. It would have to be something new though, maybe the game I would have written without hardware restrictions." We can't wait.

翻訳キングス (THE TRANSLATION KINGS)





HIS CHILDHOOD MAY HAVE BEEN AS CONTROLLED BY A LOCAL RELEASE SCHEDULE AS EVERYONE ELSE'S, BUT THAT NEVER STOPPED TIM HENDERSON FROM WANTING TO PLAY WHAT HE CAN'T FULLY UNDERSTAND

Visiting a videogame store in Japan can be an amazing experience, and not always for the reasons that you might expect. These reasons line up with why Japan can be an amazing place, but for equally surprising reasons. This is a country where tradition is practically a tradition unto itself and, as such, for all of the crazy high-tech experimentation that goes on, a lot of practices are caught up in a technological stone age. Try finding an office in the UK that still has a functioning fax machine. Now, make your way over to Japan and try to find an office that doesn't.

While stores certainly stock PS3, Vita and 3DS games that are unique to the land of the rising sun, a larger collection of the titles that were never localised likely sits neatly lined up on a different shelf, purchasable for consoles released over a decade ago.

Not that this is a bad thing – it's great that growing awareness and markets have created demand for games that otherwise would have been deemed too weird, niche or obscure. But this also underscores just how much many adult British folk had their childhood gaming memories partially decided for them by corporate boardrooms. It's not the average PAL consumer's fault that number seven was their first mainline experience with *Final Fantasy*.

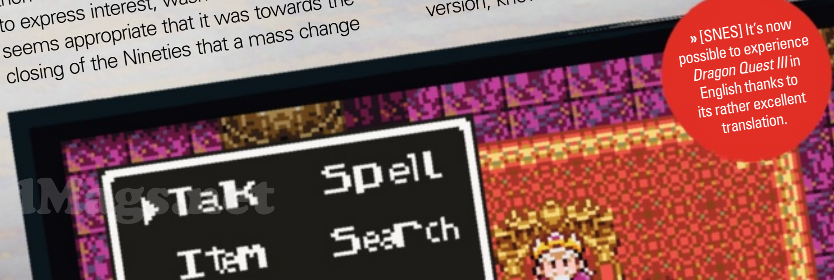
All this is, of course, a product of a time when it was less easy to learn about all of the games coming out in Japan – when visiting websites and discussion forums online, and then using that very same internet connection to express interest, wasn't a valid option. It seems appropriate that it was towards the closing of the Nineties that a mass change began and that a greater number of more left-field games began to make their way across from Japan.

Mostly, it took some education; information that made it less commonplace (even normal) to believe that Sonic the Hedgehog was an American creation. Once fans were properly aware of an important chunk of their hobby's heritage, a desire grew to experience the games they were missing, both new and old.

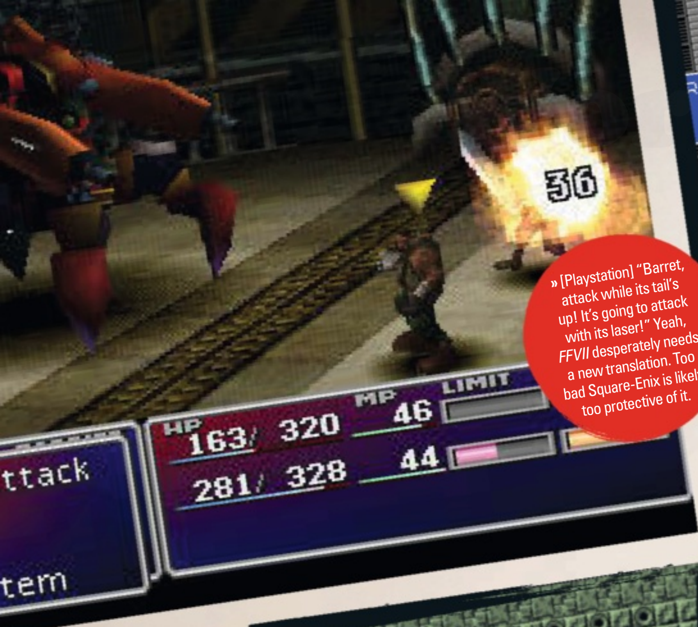
As for those who were exceptionally well plugged-in, well – *they* at least had a smattering of extra options. Specifically, the winds of change started blowing as long ago as the April of 1993, when a Dutch group calling itself Oasis translated Kojima's hyper-cute cult-classic *SD Snatcher* into English and distributed it in physical form. While the quality of this translation is considered rough (a drive to provide a more polished English language version, known as *Project Melancholia*,



» [GBA] Considering the popularity of *EarthBound*, a full translation of *Mother 3* was never going to take too long to appear.



» [SNES] It's now possible to experience *Dragon Quest III* in English thanks to its rather excellent translation.

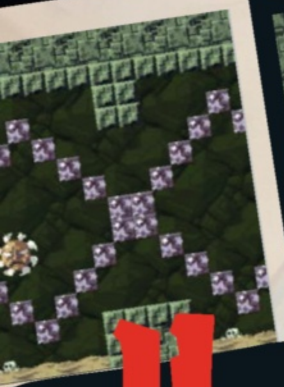


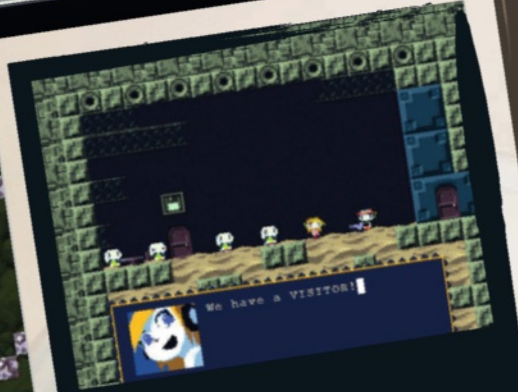
» [Playstation] "Barret, attack while its tail's up! It's going to attack with its laser!" Yeah, *FFVII* desperately needs a new translation. Too bad Square-Enix is likely too protective of it.





» [PC] Updates as recent as 2013 suggest that the translation of the Korean RPG *Magna Carta* is still alive and kicking.





> **It always felt to me like a lot of anime fansub groups were more about building reputation**
> Clyde Mandelin

was started in 2011), it nonetheless holds the distinctive and not insignificant honour of being the first known instance of a fan group translating a game that was previously impenetrable to anyone not in possession of a strong grip on the Japanese language.

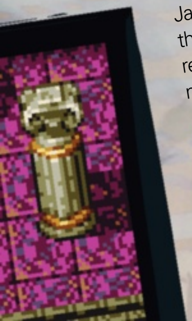
While this and a few of Oasis's other projects were something of a trickle, the scene started to grow considerably as home internet access became more commonplace. As *Final Fantasy VII* sold gangbusters on the PlayStation, Saturn owners started to rage in the face of *Grandia* being left as a Japan-only release and the players, at large, were able to look past publishers for answers.

Clyde Mandelin, a translator in both profession and hobby who is perhaps best known for his work on the unofficial English release of *Mother 3*, is understandably hesitant to give a concrete reason for the change, but he nonetheless puts the beginning pulse "around the time the PlayStation came out," citing the large number of distinctly Japanese titles that had begun to trickle through, interestingly while Sega stubbornly refused to release certain Saturn titles. The mere existence of the internet was probably the biggest enabler for change, however, and Clyde notes that "sometimes I came across FAQs (which were a big new thing then, too) that included interviews with RPG translators and rumours of stuff that was in the Japanese versions of the games."

With awareness growing rapidly, it was only a matter of time before organised groups like DeJap and sites such as RomHacking.com and The Whirlpool would sprout up and provided a point of contact where people could meet, discuss various games of interest, and get cracking with interested parties on the act of hacking roms and translating text.

These sites, as well as The Rom Hack Board before them, were of massive significance, but they were also hardly the only points of contact. Marc Laidlaw and Artemio Urbina, who collaborated to make the now-complete translation of *Policenauts* a reality, first met on the forums of a different website entirely: MetalGear.net.

"I followed Artemio's progress on *Policenauts*, and in 2003 I sent him a translation I did of the game's prologue,





» [NES] *Samurai Pizza Cats* is typical of the quirky Japanese games that rarely appear outside of their homeland. Pity.

主要な数値

KEY FIGURES

There have been (and still are) a great number of people doing impressive amounts of work for free when it comes to getting games that were ignored by publishers playable in English

CLYDE 'TOMATO' MANDELIN

FIRST PROJECT: Bahamut Lagoon **BEST KNOWN FOR:** Mother 3

■ Although his catalogue of work isn't as long as some, it's hard to look past Clyde's passion and indeed his professionalism. A Japanese-to-English translator by trade, Clyde has done most of his work in his spare time away from a day job that involves much the same thing. The real kicker, though, is the quality of his output – there are good games with English translations, and then there are games with good English translations.

MARC LAIDLAW

FIRST PROJECT: Lagrange Point (still unreleased)
BEST KNOWN FOR: Policenauts

■ *Policenauts* remains one of the best-loved fan translations, both because of the game and the quality of the translation itself. Heck, it's probably better than we would have gotten in the Nineties. "As far as the text was concerned, the buck stopped with me," Marc told us, of the benefits of working outside corporate pressures. "I think if *Policenauts* had been localised officially in the Nineties, there's a good chance the risqué content would have been toned down or removed."

GIDEON ZHI

FIRST PROJECT: Rockman 2 – Dr Wily's Riddle
BEST KNOWN FOR: Cave Story

■ Gideon is something of an all-in-one wonder, and his involvement in the scene has been incredibly active. Not only does he translate but he seems more active as a hacker, which is often a hugely under-appreciated role. This guy been involved in more projects than you might wish to count, and he's also written numerous guides to help others down the path.



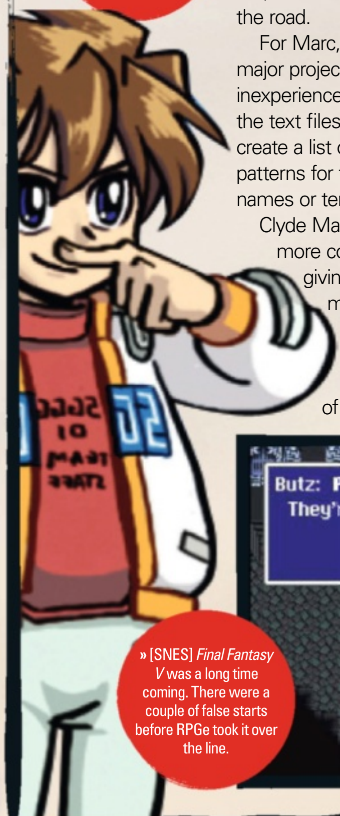
» [NES] Text heavy games like *Akira* can be quite a task. Thank goodness there are people out there up for the challenge.

as a sort of proof of concept," Marc explains. "It wasn't until 2005 that another programmer known as Meow came along and was able to produce the game's script for translation. I did the translation over the summer of 2005, between my junior and senior years at university."

Marc's story of the project's earnest beginnings brings some light to just how much work can be required during fan translation projects. There is considerably more effort involved than just replacing the words of one language with words from another, and a more diverse skill-set than fluency in a second tongue is required to provide a project with true backbone. And even when words were your only concern, it is important to remember that "the most important part of this kind of work is how well you can write in your own language."

Both Marc and Artemio are also fully aware that, without the considerable efforts of a programmer who took over from Meow and goes by the alias of Slowbeef (who, among other things, effectively made it possible to greatly increase the amount of text in the game – a huge help when working with English and its less space-efficient alphabet), the project would never have been completed.

Perhaps this is why so much stress is placed on teamwork and flexibility, and why Artemio describes the working relationship as successful because "I believe our values and way of thinking fitted together quite nicely. Marc is a perfectionist in his work and pays a lot of attention to detail."



Released in the relatively recent past as a patch that requires a PSone and a little fiddling on the player's part, the English translation of *Policenauts* has gone on to be well-received, with kind words often specifically being aimed at the translation work itself.

It's very possible that Marc's attention to detail and work ethic is important to this, and not just because it's a quality that slots neatly in line with one of Kojima's more famously obsessive-compulsive traits. When starting out, there will almost certainly be bumps in the road.

For Marc, *Policenauts* represented his first major project, and he admits that, thanks to inexperience at the time, "I just jumped into the text files and started translating. I didn't create a list of characters and devise speech patterns for them. I didn't consider what, if any, names or terms would need to be changed."

Clyde Mandelin, when asked for some more common examples, had trouble giving a simple list of routine errors made by people who are fresh-faced on the scene.

"Rookie errors is actually a big topic that I'd like to cover on one of my sites someday," he tells us in a sentence that displays a thumping example of correct grammar that even the most seasoned of professional writers get wrong on a regular basis. Of the few points he was able to provide on the spot, "being stubborn with translations" and "lacking good teamwork skills when working with other translators or editors" were the two that had the most stick to them.

A polished effort with visible experience behind it, Clyde's work on *Mother 3* was legendary even before it was released. It even attracted an amount of attention from some unexpected places.

"I got emails from staff members who worked at Nintendo, Square-Enix, Blizzard, and probably a few others that I can't remember right now," he says, in reference to just how many people were chomping at the bit to play the completed project. "In fact, I got *tons* of beer offers from everyone following the project blog."

In spite of this, Clyde has never taken a single one of these offers up. Nor is he aware of the exact number of times that the *Mother 3* patch has been downloaded. "We lost count very quickly on due to technical reasons," he explains, although he knows that it sits comfortably somewhere in the hundreds of thousands. Likewise, he is very aware that as hard as he may have worked, the patch's



» [SNES] *Final Fantasy V* was a long time coming. There were a couple of false starts before RPGe took it over the line.



» [PlayStation] It's easy to forget, but there are groups of fans out there translating games into languages other than English, too.

TRANSLATIONS TO KEEP AN EYE ON

注目しておくべき翻訳ゲーム

If you're delving into translated games this is where you should start…



MOTHER 3

■ One of the absolute holy grails, *Mother 3* had a lot to live up to. Not only was the previous game, *Earthbound*, highly revered, but its translation has a legacy all to its own. Clyde is fully aware of all of this. "It was so good to begin with," was how he put it. Fortunately, his own efforts were a success.



POLICENAUTS

■ Translating a Kojima game is no small feat. Still, Marc and Artemio went all out, and even went so far as to take a crack at Kojima's extensive glossary of terms that only showed up in the eventual Saturn version. A Saturn version that should still see English release at some point, if you can hold out.



LIVE-A-LIVE

■ There were a couple of attempts at translating this that never saw completion. It wasn't until 2008 that the Aeon Genesis group brought this odd game – which is like a mesh of multiple games – to completion. The translation is equally unique: a different translator worked on each chapter.



PROJECT MELANCHOLIA

■ This one has mixed fortunes. On one hand, as a reworking of the first ever fan translation, it has a lot to live up to; on the other, significant though it was, Oasis's original translation wasn't exactly highly scrutinised. If you want to play *SD Snatcher*, you'd do well to hold out for this.



» This feature may have a clear focus on Japanese games, but there are other scenes that are starting the receive enthusiast translation treatment, such as *Chinese Paladin* here, from… well, China.

success may largely be attributed to frothing consumer demand for the game itself: "I regularly wonder if the *Mother 3* translation gets a lot of the press and praise it does mostly more because it's a good game, and because of its unusual history, than because of the translation's quality."

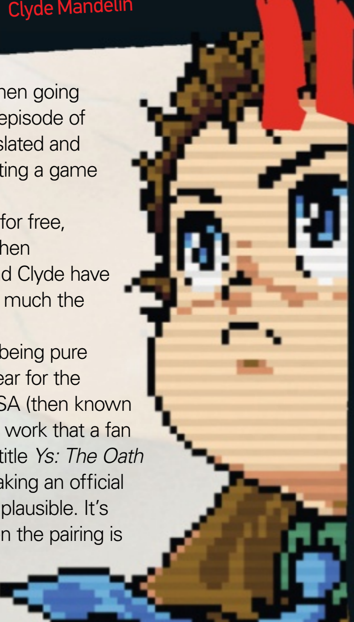
This isn't to say that he isn't chuffed with the translation's success – he is – but the story of extra downloads on the back of an in-demand title also rings true for Marc and Artemio's work with *Policenauts*. Marc comments that the comparable success of his and Artemio's own hack may well come down to Kojima being "one of the better-known creators in the industry today," as well as the fact that "*Policenauts* was his only major work never to have been officially localised outside Japan."

Internet stardom or no, translating games is a work of passion, especially when there is no official support at hand. Speaking about comparability to the anime fansub scene, which was particularly prevalent in the late Nineties, Clyde isn't coy in saying that "it always felt to me like a lot of anime fansub groups were more about building reputations or popularity than actual devotion to whatever they were working on," and then going on to rightly point out that an episode of a television show can be translated and subtitled in a day, "but translating a game can take years."

It's also a lot of work done for free, which is doubly impressive when considering that both Marc and Clyde have earned pay-cheques by doing much the same thing elsewhere.

Not that it always ends up being pure charity. 2010 was a notable year for the scene as it saw Marvelous USA (then known as XSeed) actively license the work that a fan group had done on the niche title *Ys: The Oath In Felghana* as a means of making an official port of the PSP version more plausible. It's a match made in heaven when the pairing is correct – unfortunately, it remains an exception rather than a rule.

> **"I got tons of beer offers from everyone following the blog"**
> Clyde Mandelin



"I figured that it'd be better to put the offer out there just in case something crazy and miraculous ever occurred," Clyde says, in reference to his offer to provide Nintendo with his translation work on *Mother 3* free of charge; an offer that lit up gaming blogs like a Christmas tree roughly a year back. He's aware that it's a million-to-one shot, but maybe it's a million-to-one shot worth taking, considering that "companies licensing the use of unofficial translations is becoming common these days."

As for *Policenauts*, despite a growing trend of Japanese developers noticing and generally being pleased with the existence of unofficial translations to their games, when asked if Kojima has ever commented on his and Marc's work, Artemio's response was pretty plain, and a little sad: "No, he hasn't."

It's possible that fan translations presently sit in an odd place. Japan is no longer the powerhouse of mainstream game development that it once was, and more obscure titles are getting released for foreign audiences than ever before. Presently, the translation community is centred around RomHacking.net (an ever-so-subtle evolution of the name RomHacking.com, its spiritual predecessor) and still focusses largely on translating classic games and putting violent bits into *Pokémon*.

The main concern may be that Japanese classics are probably running dry, and that there is a lack of interest in translating games from China, Korea or other countries with lesser-fetishised gaming cultures.

Or perhaps this is just silly alarmist talk and the well won't run dry, and a good ten years or more from now, **Retro Gamer** will be running a piece on how you can finally play – and follow the story of – a game that would have been titled *Yakuza 5*.



SURVIVAL KIDS 2

■ Although the original *Survival Kids* was released in English (under the title of *Stranded Kids*) for the Game Boy, its sequel never made the jump over the ocean. At present, it is being translated by a couple of fans, at least one of whom is using it as inspiration to study Japanese.



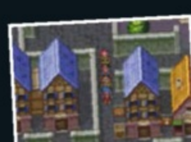
SEIKEN DENSETSU 3 (SECRET OF MANA)

■ This one is another legendary project. Hitting in the year 2000, around when the existence and usability of emulators was reaching fever pitch, this one was an early champion for the scene. And you know what? It's held up pretty well.



SEGAGAGA

■ Perhaps it's a bit late to save Sega's hardware business, but this is absolutely a case of better late than never at all. Trying to understand *Segagaga* is hard enough without the need for trying to explain it. Heaven knows how much work the translators have managed to cut out for themselves here…



BREATH OF FIRE 2

■ "If any game needed a re-translation, *this* was it," Clyde tells us of Ryusui's translation efforts with *Breath Of Fire 2*. It's also an example of a title that required more than just a dictionary at hand, with Clyde saying that "part of the awe comes from the amount of reprogramming work."



RADICAL DREAMERS

■ A game that stood less chance of a Western release than Darran did of competing in the NBA. Not only was it a visual novel, but it was a SNES game that required the Satellaview add-on. If any game highlights what emulation has done for the scene, this may just be it.



TREASURE OF THE RUDRAS

■ It's not hard to see why *Rudras* never got an official release. Even without the perceived lack of interest in RPGs, this one had a unique crutch: it featured a magic system that used words typed in by the player. That's a huge hurdle, and it's staggering that the translation was completed at all.



YS: THE OATH IN FELGHANA

■ This one stands out for a significant and perhaps slightly unfair reason: it's a fan-translated game that you can buy legally. And availability isn't really an excuse – this one is presently up for a tidy eight quid on PSN should you have a PSP or Vita, and is even for sale on Steam if you don't.

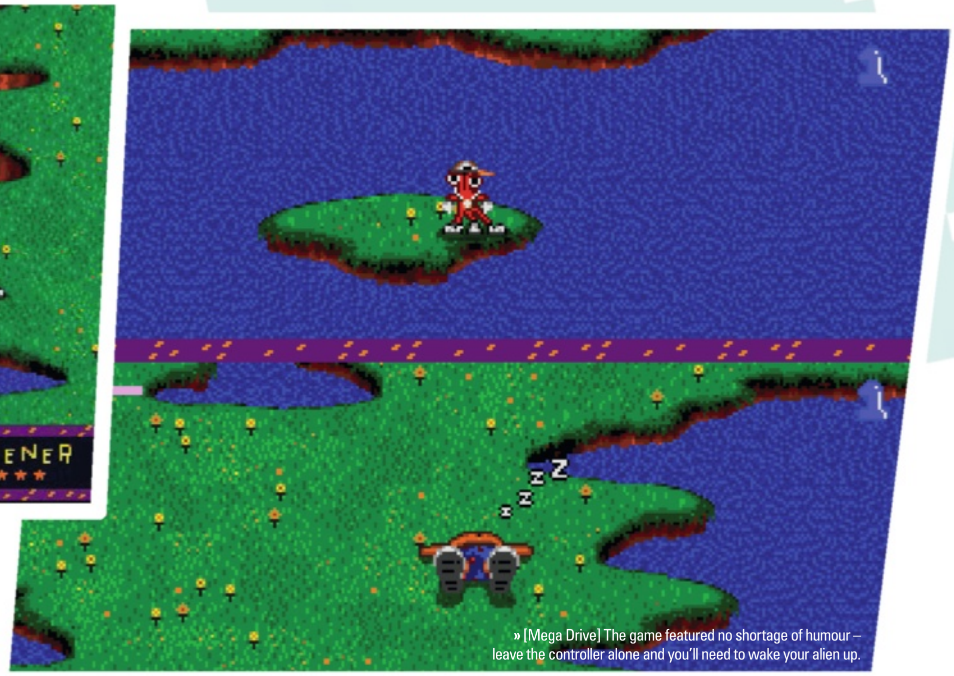


THE HISTORY OF ToeJam & Earl

Gamers blast aliens. A simple statement, but one that has been true since the Seventies. So what happens when the trope is inverted by a pair of alien rappers who crash on Earth? The birth of a cult hit, if ToeJam & Earl is anything to go by. We talk to Greg Johnson about the story of two unlikely heroes



» [Mega Drive] ToeJam and Earl exchanged greetings whenever they ran into each other, in typical laid-back fashion.

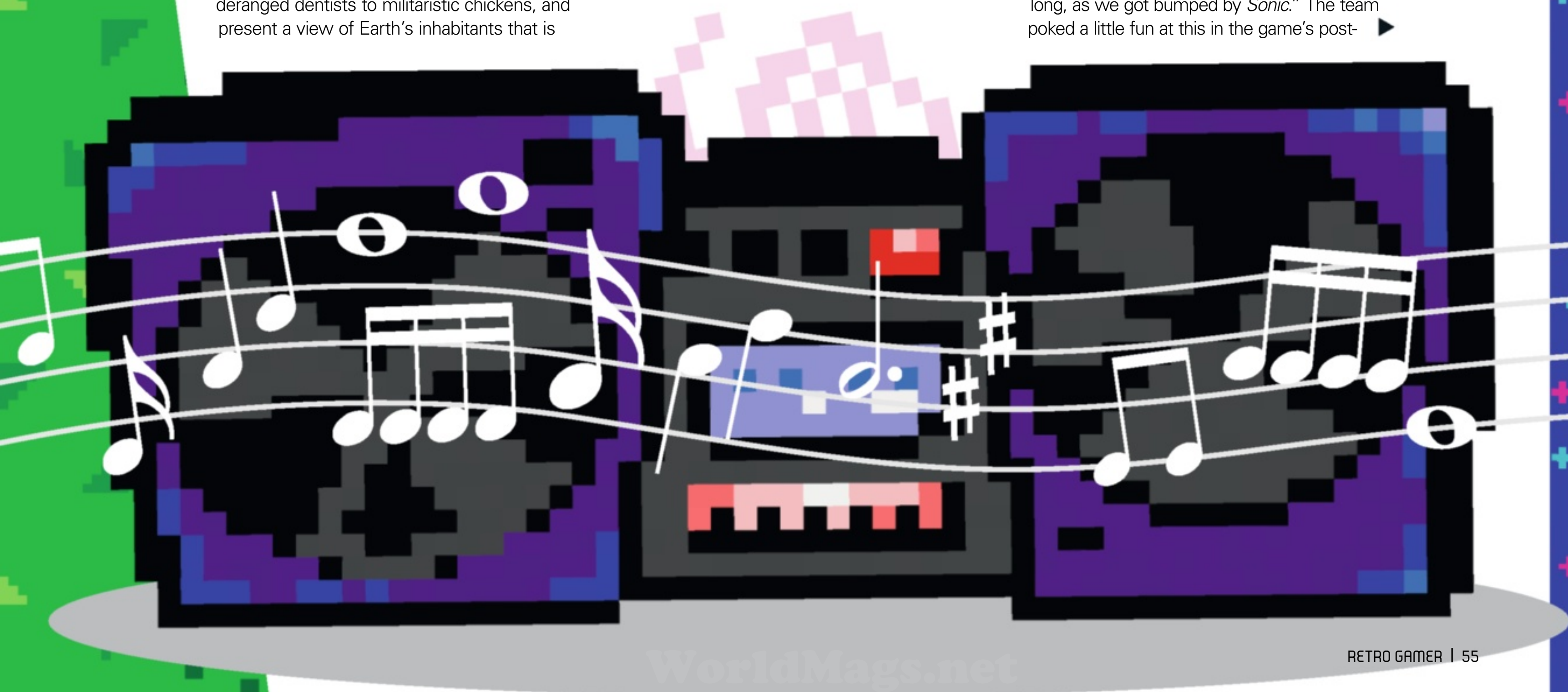

» [Mega Drive] The game featured no shortage of humour – leave the controller alone and you'll need to wake your alien up.

If any trend defines the 16-bit console market of the early Nineties, it is easily the saturation of mascot characters. Every company seemed to have cartoon creations to unleash upon an increasingly weary gaming public, and it took something a little special to stand out from the crowd. As a red three-legged alien and a large yellow alien united by their love of rap, *ToeJam & Earl*'s titular heroes definitely did just that. The offbeat nature of the characters gave them a unique appeal and didn't just extend to their designs – Greg Johnson, designer of the aliens from Funkotron, told us back in issue 71 that the unusual names were the result of programmer Mark Voorsanger mishearing the intended names FlowJam and Whirl.

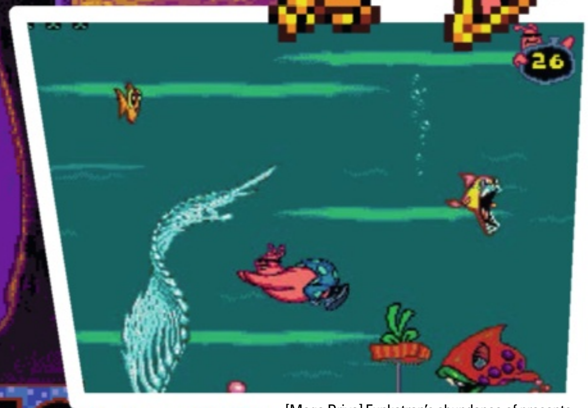
The alien duo first reached our screens in a cooperative exploration game that took its inspiration from *Rogue*, which Greg had discovered while studying at university. ToeJam and Earl have crashed on Earth and need to find the ten scattered pieces of their spacecraft, while avoiding a range of hostile Earthlings. These enemies range from cart-wielding shoppers and deranged dentists to militaristic chickens, and present a view of Earth's inhabitants that is equal parts satirical and bizarre. While the setting is roughly as far from high fantasy as it's possible to get, *ToeJam & Earl* shares certain common features with its inspiration, particularly in its use of randomised stages. Where it differed was in its approach to combat, which was dependent on finding items and generally best avoided, and its two-player mode.

When ToeJam and Earl drift too far apart to fit on a single screen, the game instantly transitions to a split-screen mode until they reunite. It's an elegant solution to allow players full freedom, but particularly technically demanding. "We weren't sure it was going to work at all. Sega told us it couldn't be done," remembers Greg. "But Mark Voorsanger is a pretty bright guy and very determined too. He pulled it off somehow. I'm surprised we haven't seen more of that in other games since then." The implementation was impressive – not only could players travel independently, they were even able to play on entirely different stages simultaneously. While players were free to explore in different directions, there were benefits to sticking together – they were able to high-five to transfer health and could even share lives if one player had run out.

While the game wasn't picked up on the basis of its strengths in character design, late in development Sega started to look at *ToeJam & Earl* with fresh eyes. "Sega never mentioned anything to us about our characters until the very end of the project when it looked for a brief time like *ToeJam & Earl* might become their mascots," Greg reveals. "That didn't last long, as we got bumped by *Sonic*." The team poked a little fun at this in the game's post- ▶





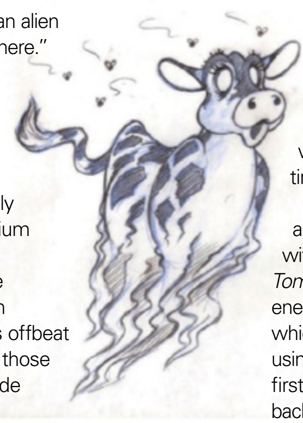
» [Mega Drive] Funkotron's abundance of presents goes beyond the surface.

» [Mega Drive] Venturing to the Underfunk was often a dangerous affair, thanks to the fiery floors.

> " WE DID OUR BEST TO KEEP THE SPIRIT OF EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY THAT WE HAD IN GAME ONE, BUT IT WAS A CHALLENGE "
>
> Greg Johnson

▶ credits sequence on Funkotron, where an alien can be seen saying "No hedgehogs 'round here."

ToeJam & Earl received a mixed response from the press. Its detractors were particularly vocal in criticising the game, particularly when it came to the slow pace of proceedings. *ACE*'s review went so far as to say "Boring really doesn't quite sum up the toe-curling tedium of the whole debacle." *ToeJam & Earl* also received a good number of positive reviews, particularly from publications in Europe. Praise focussed on the game's offbeat humour and excellent music, but even those publications that praised the game made



note of the its weirdness and potential to polarise audiences. "That's what happens whenever you release something quirky and new," concludes Greg. "Some people love it and some don't get it at all." Sales were initially slow and the game took a long time to build a following via word of mouth.

After the first game, an oddity in the series appeared on the six-game cartridge bundled with Sega's Menacer lightgun. *Ready, Aim, Tomatoes!* was a simplistic game featuring enemies from the original *ToeJam & Earl*, which needed to be pelted with tomatoes. Re-using a fair amount of visual material from the first game, it was a short but fun way to dip back into the *ToeJam & Earl* world.

A full sequel was soon put into production by Greg and Mark in spite of the difficulties with the first game. *ToeJam & Earl*'s sequel was set to build on the original game with new terrain and indoor sections. But after only a few months of development, a change of direction was requested. "Sega asked us for a side-scroller with bigger characters so that's what we set about making," says Greg, who was unsurprised by the request. "All along the development of game one we knew that we were sort of off the beaten path. We hoped Sega's marketing would get it once the game was done, but we were still a bit too much outside the box."

In *ToeJam & Earl: Panic On Funkotron*, we join our heroes following a successful return to their home planet after the events of the first game. Unfortunately, something came back with them – Earthlings by the dozen, who were now running amok on Funkotron. ToeJam and Earl have to solve the Earthling problem, as well as luring out Lamont the Funkapotamus – the source of all funk in the universe – who has gone into hiding since the humans arrived.

The goal for the team was to make the game feel like a sequel, despite the drastic change of genre. "We did our best to keep the spirit of exploration and discovery that we had in game one, but it was a challenge," recalls Greg. This came primarily in the need to hunt for Earthlings, ranging from bratty ankle-kicking kids to downright bizarre enemies such as ghost cows and ducks on flying carpets. An arrow on the HUD directs players to their next targets, who might be causing havoc out in the open or hiding in trees and bushes. Once discovered, ToeJam and Earl need to

MELODY MAKERS

Toejam & Earl isn't the only game influenced by music…



ROCK STAR ATE MY HAMSTER

■ Various ■ 1988

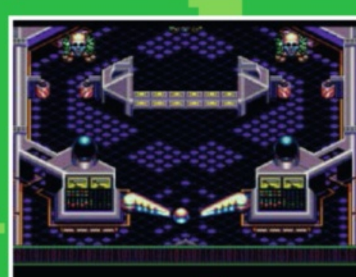
This management sim from Codemasters saw players attempting to create a musical sensation and earn four gold discs in a year. Musicians such as Rick Ghastley, Bruce Stringbean and Tina Turnoff parodied real-world stars, while players could put their bands through the entire rock star experience, from publicity stunts and video shoots to soothing their egos with gifts.

MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER

■ Various ■ 1990

The first of Michael Jackson's game appearances was this isometric beat-'em-up, licensed from the movie of the same name. The pop star wandered around rescuing children and dispatching bad guys, all to some of his best tunes. Jacko's special attack even saw him break into dance to defeat every visible enemy.





CRÜE BALL

■ Mega Drive ■ 1992

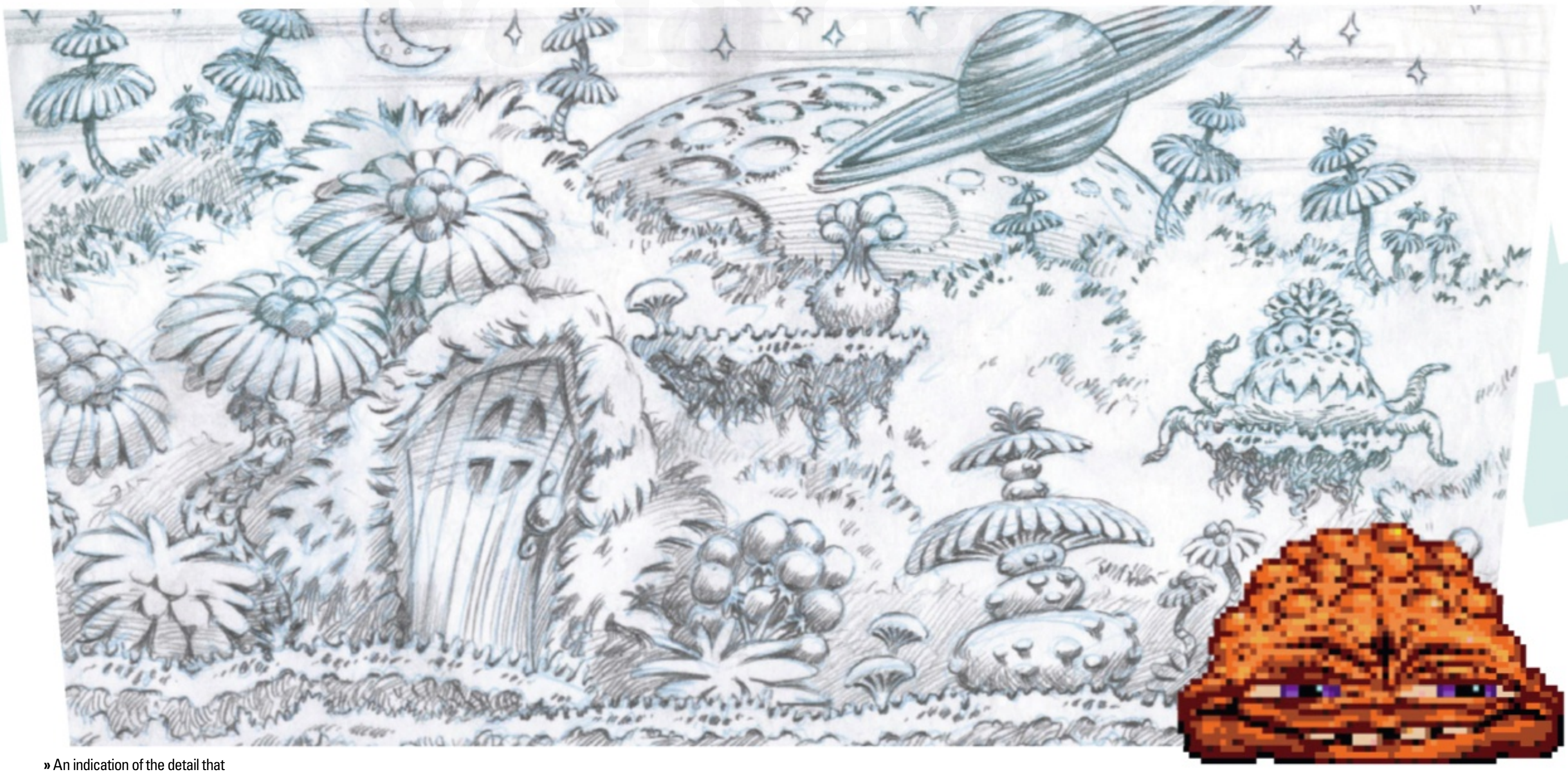
Crüe Ball was always intended to have its musical theme, but the endorsement from Motley Crüe came rather late in the day, after a failed bid to license the *Headbanger's Ball* name from MTV. The game features the tracks *Dr Feelgood*, *Live Wire* and . – though none of them play during the main pinball action.

ROCK 'N ROLL RACING

■ Various ■ 1993

The combative racing action of *Rock 'N Roll Racing* was enhanced by a variety of well-known rock standards. Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*, Deep Purple's *Highway Star*, George Thorogood's *Bad To The Bone* and more were given excellent renditions by Tim Follin and George Follin, who got the best out of both of the SNES and Mega Drive.





» An indication of the detail that went into creating *ToeJam & Earl*'s world.

pelt Earthlings with jars to capture them for transport back to Earth.

The trademark style of the first game was back in full force, with bright colours and excellent music, as well as amusing dialogue exchanges with the various inhabitants of Funkotron encountered throughout the game. The action took place across a variety of locations, from the streets of Funkotron to underwater stages and fiery caverns. The stages were designed by Greg and Evan Wells, who would later go on to design work for Crystal Dynamics before joining Naughty Dog, where he is now co-president. The two of them packed the game with content, including secret areas, bonus stages and even some mini-games. The most memorable of these was the beat-matching game with ToeJam and Earl's friends. Peabo, Sharla or Lewanda would provide a beat in the form of a button sequence the player had to match, a style of rhythm-action gameplay that would later be fully explored by the *PaRappa The Rapper* series.

Greg was proud of the team's achievements with the game. "The game was a lot of fun to make, and I know we were very happy with how it turned out. I think we squeezed a *ton* of gameplay and content into that one year. We were only three people for one year but we really kicked butt on that one." *Panic On Funkotron* was released during the height of the Mega Drive's popularity and its safe choice of genre meant that it wasn't nearly as polarising to critics as the original game. The game generally did well across the board, with scores of over 90 per cent from *Sega Pro*, *Mean Machines Sega* and *Mega*.

However, the game developed a negative reputation with fans of the original for straying too far from the formula of the first game, and in recent years the positive responses from contemporary critics have become somewhat forgotten. It's not hard to understand this point of view though, particularly considering that even Greg expresses regret over the change of genre: "If I had a time machine I'd pop back and tell the old us to ignore all of the requests from Sega to change the second game and continue with things as we'd started – and build game two to be a true sequel to game one."

The ambition to make a true sequel would be revisited with *ToeJam & Earl III: Mission To Earth* (then codenamed 'ToeJam, Earl ▶



JET SET RADIO

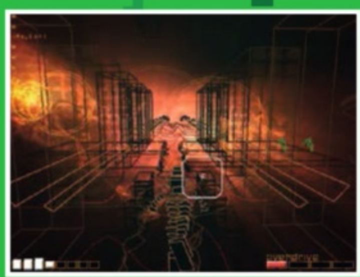
■ Dreamcast ■ 2000

Jet Set Radio's musical focus goes far beyond its acclaimed soundtrack. Your goal is to stop antagonist Goji Rokkaku's attempts to piece together The Devil's Contract, a vinyl record that will allow him to take over the world. The game's story is told through broadcasts from Tokyo-to's pirate radio station Jet Set Radio, hosted by the excitable DJ Professor K.

REZ

■ Dreamcast/PlayStation 2 ■ 2001

Rez is an on-rails shooter themed around synaesthesia, a condition in which senses are joined. As you progress through each stage, the licensed music from electronic artists such as Ken Ishii and Adam Freeland builds in complexity. Defeating enemies adds unique sound effects matched to the music, as well as visual flourishes in the stage's signature colour.





ETERNAL SONATA

■ Xbox 360/PlayStation 3 ■ 2007

Eternal Sonata ditches the typical sci-fi and fantasy themes of RPGs for a musical dream world set in the imagination of Frédéric Chopin, in which characters including Polka, Allegretto, Beat and Chopin himself journey through the lands of Forte and Baroque. The game features a selection of Chopin's compositions, played by Russian pianist Stanislav Bunin.

SOUND SHAPES

■ PlayStation Vita ■ 2013

Queasy Games's platformer includes musical elements in a similar way to *Rez* – the soundtrack builds as you make progress throughout each stage. The game has a more diverse soundtrack however, featuring the work of Beck and deadmau5 amongst others. Players can also create their own musical platforming action thanks to the included level editor.







» [Dreamcast] Co-op is functional in the leaked Dreamcast prototype of *ToeJam & Earl III*.



» [Dreamcast] The Dreamcast game's engine was admirable, showing large stages at a high frame rate.

RECURRING DREAMS

Other lost Dreamcast games that resurfaced

PROPELLER ARENA

DEVELOPER: Sega AM2



■ Sega's most infamous Dreamcast cancellation was *Propeller Arena*, an aerial combat game touted as "a flight simulator for fighting game fans". The game featured a cast of colourful characters battling over eight stages, as well as online play. The game was on track for a late 2001 release, but was postponed indefinitely following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and cancelled the next month. The game was leaked online in seemingly finished form in 2004.

HALF-LIFE

DEVELOPER: Gearbox Software



■ Dreamcast fans were up in arms when Valve's classic was cancelled in June 2001. The game had been in development for a long time, with the conversion handled by Gearbox Software, with promised features including a graphical overhaul and extended maps. *The Blue Shift* expansion, which featured Black Mesa security guard Barney Calhoun, was originally planned as a Dreamcast exclusive too. The game was leaked online in 2004 in a largely complete and playable form.

HELLGATE

DEVELOPER: Horny Dog



■ Another victim of Sega's announced discontinuation of the Dreamcast, *Hellgate*'s publisher canned the game in May 2001 after 15 months of development. The game was pitched as a cross between *Quake* and *WipEout*, with high speed combat the order of the day as the Hellbike-riding protagonist Marv blasted his way through demonic creatures. The game resurfaced in 2009, after having been found in an advanced stage of development on a Katana unit.

And Latisha'). The project began life as a Dreamcast game in 2000, developed by TJ&E Productions and Sega's US studio Visual Concepts. *ToeJam & Earl III* was set to return to the formula of the original Mega Drive game while including Latisha, a new female character with a feisty attitude, as well as new features such as online multiplayer. The game retained the cooperative exploration key to the series as well as *Panic On Funkotron*'s increased focus on combat, with the introduction of Funk-Fu and Funkify attacks to ward off pesky Earthlings. This time our Funkotronian heroes were back on Earth, searching for the 12 Sacred Albums of Funk which had been stolen by the Earthlings, as well as looking to defeat the Anti-Funk.

Unfortunately, the years following *Panic On Funkotron* had not been kind to Sega. The Saturn had suffered in the marketplace and the Dreamcast had failed to turn the situation around. In fact, when the game made its public debut at E3 in May 2001, production of the console had already ceased and Sega was in transition to its new status as a third party. After a brief surge of excitement, the game quietly disappeared as a new platform was sought. The PlayStation 2 and GameCube were preferred choices, but ease of development and Microsoft's promises of marketing support ensured that by the time the game resurfaced, almost a year later in April 2002, it was bound for the recently launched Xbox.

In its new incarnation, *ToeJam & Earl III* retained many elements of the Dreamcast design and had received a visual upgrade to account for the new host hardware, but Greg informs us that the change cost the game one of the features that could have distinguished it from the crowd. "One of the things I was bummed about was we had to jettison the online multiplayer mode that we had been building for the Dreamcast. And it was pretty much done too on the DC, but we didn't have



» [Dreamcast] Many concepts intended for the aborted sequel to *ToeJam & Earl* showed up in *ToeJam & Earl III*, such as ice stages.



» [Dreamcast] New girl Latisha in her Dreamcast appearance, showing just how far concept work had progressed.



» [Xbox] Familiar enemies such as the little devil made their return for *ToeJam & Earl III*.

"WE HAD TO JETTISON THE ONLINE MULTIPLAYER MODE THAT WE HAD BEEN BUILDING FOR THE DREAMCAST"
Greg Johnson

time to get it working and debugged on the Xbox." The game did at least become one of the first to have downloadable content over Microsoft's new Xbox Live service.

While some changes were driven by time constraints, a whole range of unfortunate ones were requested by Sega, which had started to worry about the game's viability before release. "The original idea was to do a very faithful remake of game one," recalls Greg, "but Visual Concepts thought that was too old school." The changes that were requested drastically altered the structure of the game. "Six months before we released Sega asked us to change course and add in mini-games and gates, bosses, more locked collectibles and make it a hub structure instead of stacked levels," remembers Greg. "They said they wanted it more like *Donkey Kong 64*."

The result of the executive meddling was plain to see. Reviews for *ToeJam & Earl III* were generally less favourable than for either of the Mega Drive games, with much criticism directed at the repetitive nature of the new gameplay structure. Old fans were put off and newcomers weren't enticed, resulting in disappointing sales. Greg feels that the late changes were detrimental to the game's chances: "I think we lost a lot of support from our core audience who were once again confused by the change up. That was twice in a row, and it sort of killed the series. Sorry about that, *TJ&E* fans."

While Toejam & Earl Productions tried to keep the aliens active, there hasn't been an official release in the series since *ToeJam & Earl III*. Greg's pitch for a multiplayer Nintendo DS game failed to find any interest from publishers and was abandoned in 2007, while licensing issues have kept the duo out of Sega's recent crossover games such as *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing*. But the story doesn't end there.

In September 2013, a forum member at Assembler Games purchased a Katana Dreamcast development unit and made a surprising announcement: the kit contained a playable build of *ToeJam & Earl III*. Greg was asked for permission to release the prototype, but was understandably unable to officially endorse it. "We told him that we couldn't really give him permission for the parts we don't own, but that as long as he didn't sell it we wouldn't sue or get in the way." With no response from Sega, a community release of the disc image was made just a few months later, allowing Dreamcast players to get their hands on the game at long last.

This early version shows where the game was heading at that point in time, playing closely to Greg's original vision of a faithful remake. Some of the elements of the Xbox release such as Latisha and Funk-Fu attacks are present, as are the gospel singers, but the Dreamcast prototype features linear stage progression using elevators as in the original game, instead of a hub world. The prototype isn't close to complete – the game boots straight to a character select screen and starts to become unstable after stage nine – but there's a good amount of gameplay available still.

While he may not be able to approve the leaked prototype, after ToeJam and Earl have spent a decade out of the limelight Greg's response is a positive one. "We're actually glad to have *ToeJam & Earl* out there at all, and it's nice to see that there are still people who remember it and get excited about it."

STRANGE SIBLINGS

ToeJam & Earl isn't the only classic game to have had a drastically different sequel

ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK

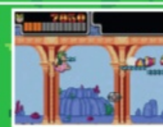
■ NES ■ 1987



Zelda II's changes to the gameplay of the original baffled fans and have earned the game an unfavourable reputation. The top-down adventuring of the first game was replaced with side-scrolling towns and battles. However, some elements have been retained for later games, such as magic use.

WONDER BOY III: MONSTER LAIR

■ Arcade ■ 1989



The traditions of the *Wonder Boy* series gave way to shooting for this instalment. Some stages stay on-foot, while others have you taking to the sky on the back of a dragon. Westone discarded this gameplay style after *Monster Lair*, returning to platform action.

DYNASTY WARRIORS 2

■ PlayStation 2 ■ 2000



The original *Dynasty Warriors* was a one-on-one fighting game, but when the series returned on the PlayStation 2 it had become a drastically different proposition, sporting new hack-and-slash gameplay. This set the tone for the series, and it never returned to the style of the first game.



» [Xbox] The Earthling enemies still carried the series' standard sense of humour in the third game.



» [Xbox] The Xbox version's visual overhaul included improved water effects and more buildings in stages.



MOVIE LICENCE AWARDS

Join Retro Gamer as we recognise the 10 greatest film tie-ins to ever jump from the silver screen

BEST TECHNICAL DESIGN

THE NOMINEES: BATMAN: THE MOVIE (VARIOUS) ■ ROBOCOP (VARIOUS) ■ TOY STORY (MEGA DRIVE) ■ DIE HARD TRILOGY (VARIOUS)

And the winner is…

DIE HARD TRILOGY **PLATFORM** PLAYSTATION **DEVELOPER** PROBE **YEAR** 1996

It's not unusual for a licensed game to include a variety of gameplay styles, applying them to scenes according to best fit. Winners of some of our other awards have done this, from *RoboCop* to *Toy Story*. But the *Die Hard Trilogy* approach was rather more unorthodox. Developer Probe took the three films, designed a unique game for each and put them together as a package.

The original *Die Hard* was a third-person shooter, with John McClane rescuing hostages across various floors of Nakatomi Plaza. *Die Hard 2: Die Harder* was a lightgun shoot-'em-up with shades of *Virtua Cop*, featuring destructible environments. *Die Hard With A Vengeance* featured McClane driving around New York finding bombs to disarm and dodging taxis, as well as chasing bomb-carrying vehicles.

Each game implements the same macabre sense of humour as the films. *Die Hard With A Vengeance* sees the windscreen wipers activate to remove the blood of pedestrians that are run down, while *Die Hard 2* features 'mercy kill' awards for shooting civilians engulfed in flames.

This offering was the result of a long development period and could easily have collapsed under the weight of its own ambition, especially given that the team was new to developing 3D games and didn't have access to production materials. Probe's ambition paid off handsomely though, delivering critical acclaim and high sales, so we couldn't help but give the award to *Die Hard Trilogy*.



» [PlayStation] The driving section is still fast and furious.



» [PlayStation] A fantastic blaster that still looks great.



» [PlayStation] It's a good day to die hard. See what we did there?

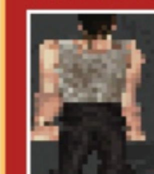
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On the carpet with…



JAMES DUNCAN

3D world modeller, Die Hard Trilogy



How did you get to work on *Die Hard*?
I was offered a job at Probe as they really needed artists with experience of 3D graphics. During the interview I was shown a test of *Die Hard 3*. What really caught my eye was the car's neon flashing lights. It may seem daft now but to see proper semi-transparency at a high fps, outside of an arcade, was amazing at the time. Of course, I accepted the job.

How did you go about choosing the sequences for each level?
The sequences literally picked themselves really. Each film was just jam-packed with great set pieces or iconic imagery. I was given pretty much carte blanche to create much of *Die Hard 2*'s levels. So I sat at home replaying and pausing the VHS endless times and sketched out levels before running them past the team for advice and changes. It was a huge kick having that much input and I took the responsibility very seriously.

Aside from your own, what's your favourite film licence?
I'll always have a soft spot for *RoboCop*. I waited for months for that to come out on the ST, devouring every magazine for news of it. It's the quintessential movie tie-in. Set in the Eighties, a lone macho lead, good versus very bad and big guns. I wish they still existed! In fact, if Ocean got back together, grabbed the *Oblivion* licence and announced a 2D side-scrolling Tom Cruise blaster, I'd be in.



BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

THE NOMINEES: TOY STORY (MEGA DRIVE) ■ ALADDIN (VARIOUS) ■ THE LION KING (VARIOUS)



And the winner is…

ALADDIN **PLATFORM** VARIOUS **DEVELOPER** VIRGIN GAMES USA **YEAR** 1993



» [Mega Drive] The Capcom outing is decent, but Virgin's game looks far better.

Disney's licensed platform games were often worth watching out for in the Nineties, but *Aladdin* is the one that takes our award. Unusually, three different versions of *Aladdin* were developed by three different teams. SIMS did a reasonable job on Sega's 8-bit consoles and Capcom made a fondly remembered SNES version, but it's the Mega Drive version (later converted to the Amiga and PC) that we've chosen to cover.

With the saturation of platform games in the Nineties, it took a lot for any individual title to stand out. But Virgin's version of *Aladdin* wasn't just licensed from an animated film – it looked as close as you could get, thanks to the work of Disney's own animators and an innovative animation technology called Digicel. Boasting hundreds of frames of animation for *Aladdin* alone, the distinctive visual style of the movie was recreated flawlessly in the game. Guards had particularly hilarious animations, losing their trousers when hit and scoffing doughnuts when left to their own devices.

David Perry took charge of development, with his team experienced after working on *Global Gladiators* and *Cool Spot*. Unlike in other versions, *Aladdin* was given free use of his sword, contributing to the authentic feel. Meanwhile, great level designs covered all of the key action from the film, from escaping guards on the streets of Agrabah to the magic carpet ride out of the Cave of Wonders. As a game of exceptionally high quality in all aspects, *Aladdin* is the deserving recipient of this award.

BEST SCORE

THE NOMINEES: MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER (MEGA DRIVE) ■ ROBOCOP (GAME BOY) ■ THE JUNGLE BOOK (MASTER SYSTEM) ■ GHOSTBUSTERS (C64)

And the winner is…

ROBOCOP **PLATFORM** GAME BOY **DEVELOPER** OCEAN **YEAR** 1989









Ocean had a knack for picking up excellent licences, but *RoboCop* was one of the company's biggest success stories. Having picked up the videogame rights at script stage, Ocean was able to sub-license the title to Data East, which produced the *RoboCop* arcade game. Showing a great understanding of the differences between the arcade and home markets, Ocean then converted Data East's game to 8-bit and 16-bit computers while adding a considerable amount of original content.

The additions for the home versions included first-person shootouts with criminals and photofit identification sections, but the run-and-gun sections still made up the bulk of the gameplay. The original soundtrack, composed by Jonathan Dunn, remains one of the game's strongest features.

The title theme remains the most memorable tune in the game, which was used across the 8-bit micro versions of *RoboCop* as well as the Game Boy version. As any of these versions will provide you with a great listen – we're recognising all of them with this award.

RoboCop's music would go on to have an unusually wide reach, thanks to an advert for home appliances company Ariston. A member of staff at the advertising agency had been playing the Game Boy version, and suggested the title theme as an ideal piece of music to use. The deal was done and the theme was played in millions of living rooms across the UK unaltered – unlike the movie, which suffered from unintentionally hilarious TV censorship.



On the carpet with...
DAVID CRANE
Game designer, Ghostbusters



How did you get the job of working on *Ghostbusters*?
Activision management brought the *Ghostbusters* script into the game design lab just weeks before the film was released into theatres. Reading the script and imagining what those giants of improv might make of it, we were interested in making the game. But there really wasn't time to make a game from scratch and still publish it before the value of the licence would start to decline.

I suggested that the only way to make it happen was to re-task an existing code base to get a head start on the programming of background and sprite systems, etc. I had the best candidate for this, a game that I was working on that was slated to become *Car Wars*. I had a top-view driving system, an in-game economy where you could buy weapons for your car, and a navigable city map.

Were you surprised by the success of the game?
Most videogame historians don't consider that there was a successful movie game before *Ghostbusters*. The common belief in regard to marketing a videogame is that if it is a great game, market it on its own merits. If it is a mediocre game, slap a licence on it to increase sales. I set out to make a great game that people would enjoy regardless of the movie licence, and then had some fun with the *Ghostbusters* licence along the way (such as the title screen).

If, as I believed, it was a great game, then it would likely be successful. With the added benefit of a popular licence, I suppose I would have been surprised if it were not successful.

Whose speech is it in *Ghostbusters*?
I don't remember. I made the C64 talk with a pure software solution. Prior to Atari and Activision, I was at National Semiconductor working with analogue-to-digital and digital-to-analogue converters. I could whip up an audio digitiser in an afternoon. I have a vague recollection of setting up a digitiser, walking down the hall from my office gathering up five or six people, and all yelling "Ghostbusters!" into the mic.

BEST VOICE ACTING

THE NOMINEES: STAR WARS (ARCADE) ■ GHOSTBUSTERS (C64) ■ TOY STORY (MEGA DRIVE) ■ BLADE RUNNER (PC)

And the winner is...

GHOSTBUSTERS
PLATFORM C64 **DEVELOPER** OCEAN **YEAR** 1984

While it has very few speech clips, community responses for this award made *Ghostbusters* the clear winner. The shouts of "Ghostbusters!" and "He slimed me!" put you in the shoes of the professional paranormal eliminators. But given how well the game captured the feel of the film, it's surprising to find that it was built from a different concept altogether. With only a short time to put the game together after Activision received the script, David Crane had to discontinue work on his project *Car Wars* and repurpose the design to fit the movie.

Ghostbusters wasn't the first home videogame to include speech, but the way it did so was very technically impressive. The feature was achieved solely in software, at a time when Commodore was still marketing the Magic Voice hardware add-on to add speech to games.

That *Ghostbusters* wins this award is a recognition of how the smallest details can do a lot to enhance a game. The voice acting in *Ghostbusters* is non-essential, and many other developers may have simply passed on the effort required for speech and substituted more traditional sound effects in its place. But these clips made the experience memorable in a way that has kept the game in players' memories for decades.

As you'll see from David's interview, the identity of the voice actor has sadly been lost. So this award serves one more important purpose, the recognition of a forgotten hero of gaming – the *Ghostbusters* voice actor.



» [C64] Before you get to bust ghosts you have to drive over to their location.

> "I set out to make a game that people would enjoy regardless of the licence"
> David Crane

retro GAMER Voice Acting



BEST SET-PIECE

THE NOMINEES: THE LION KING (VARIOUS) ■ STAR WARS (ARCADE) ■ BATMAN RETURNS (MEGA-CD) ■ ROBOCOP (VARIOUS)

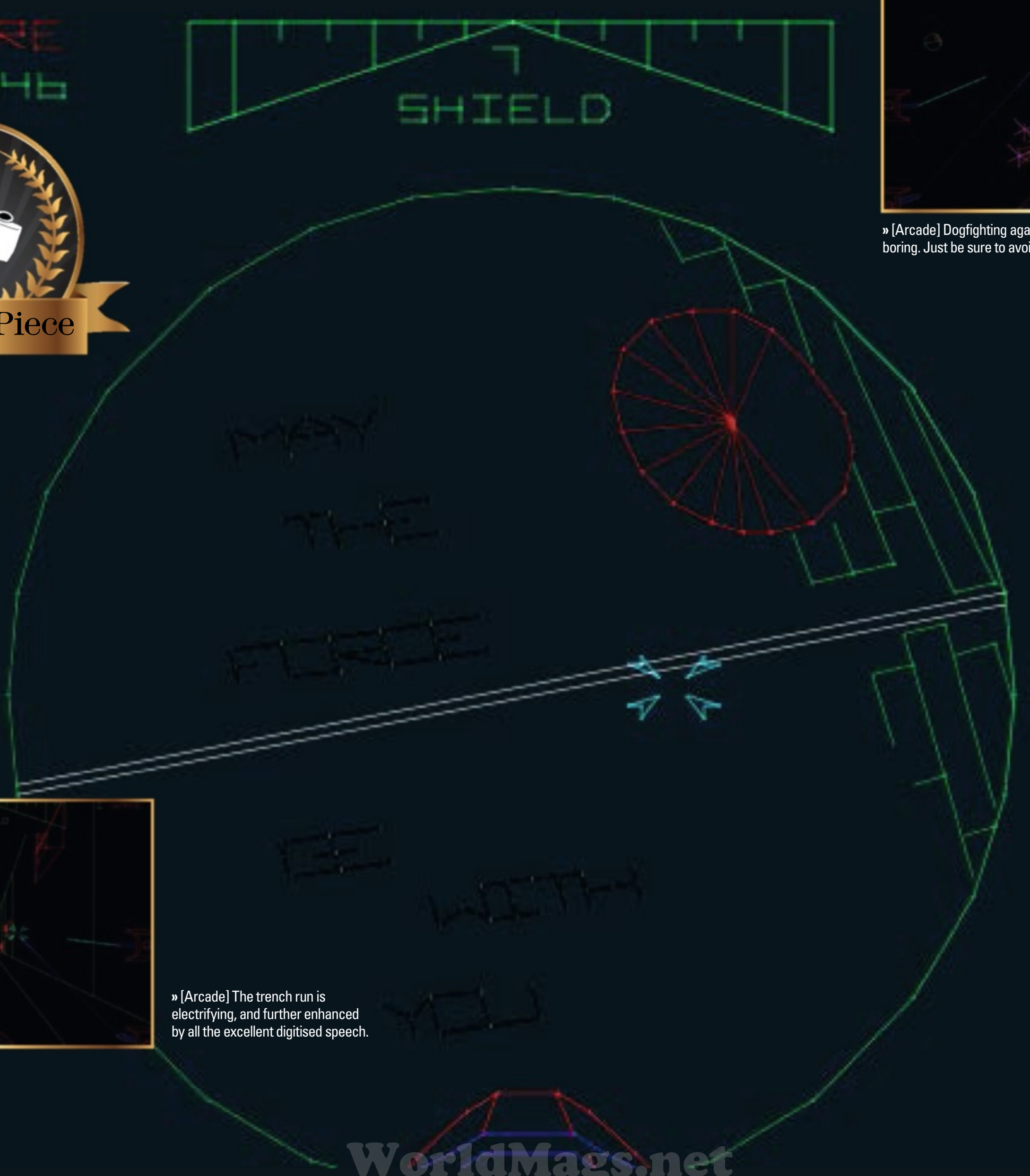
And the winner is...

STAR WARS **PLATFORM** ARCADE **DEVELOPER** ATARI **YEAR** 1983

The Death Star trench run is one of the movie scenes that is most often recreated by videogames, but not without reason – over 35 years later, it remains exciting to watch. Many developers have sought to place players in the cockpit for this classic film moment, including Sega, LucasArts and Factor-5, with THQ even releasing a mobile game solely around this part of the film. However, Atari nailed it on the very first try.

Having survived the battle in outer space and cleared out the laser towers on the surface of the Death Star, you dive into the trench. Obi-Wan Kenobi instructs you to use the force as your view spins and the iconic theme kicks in, as barriers formed of bright vector lines begin hurtling toward you at high speed. R2-D2 makes his characteristic beeps and squeals as you try to take out the laser cannons, all the while diving over and under the barriers. Finally, the exhaust port is coming up and you need to hit it with the photon torpedoes. You've missed before and a second run at the trench is more trouble than it's worth. But this time you manage to blast it, with the Death Star fading into the distance before exploding.

Everything Atari put into this sequence – from the impressive 3D effect to Han Solo's exclamation of "You're all clear, kid!" – makes you feel like a Jedi. You *are* Luke Skywalker and you just blew up the Death Star.







» [Arcade] Dogfighting against TIE Fighters never gets boring. Just be sure to avoid those fireballs.



» [Arcade] The trench run is electrifying, and further enhanced by all the excellent digitised speech.



BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

THE NOMINEES: STAR WARS (ARCADE) ■ TOY STORY (MEGA DRIVE) ■ COBRA (ZX SPECTRUM) ■ JURASSIC PARK (ARCADE)

And the winner is...

TOY STORY **PLATFORM** MEGA DRIVE **DEVELOPER** TRAVELLER'S TALES **YEAR** 1996





» [Mega Drive] A truly astonishing game that looks like a Pixar movie (if you squint quite hard).

Toy Story was a groundbreaking movie, being the first fully computer-animated feature film. Releasing the licensed game of a state-of-the-art movie on the Mega Drive and SNES might have seemed strange in 1996, but Traveller's Tales used this to its advantage. Working on 16-bit consoles very late in their lifespan, the studio's expertise stretched the technology to produce a fun platformer featuring some of the most impressive visuals on either system. But it's the Mega Drive version that clinches the award, as it not only overcomes greater hardware challenges but includes an exclusive stage, which just happens to be one of the most visually impressive in the game.

Toy Story was one of the games that jumped on the mid-Nineties trend for pre-rendered sprites, which emerged from the success of *Donkey Kong Country.* This approach was perfectly suited for bringing *Toy Story* home, retaining the look and feel of the movie perfectly. However, the use of pre-rendered sprites alone wouldn't qualify the game for this award and the most impressive visuals in *Toy Story* are often found outside of its platform stages.

The first-person hunt for alien toys in Really Inside The Claw Machine put every dedicated first-person Mega Drive game to shame, boasting a more detailed environment and smoother motion. Meanwhile, the exclusive Day-Toy-Na stage pulls off a polygonal road and scenery without the use of additional hardware. Sega's hardware, by then the better part of a decade old, really couldn't have gone out looking better.

BEST DIRECTOR

THE NOMINEES: DAVID CRANE (GHOSTBUSTERS) ■ DAVID PERRY (ALADDIN) ■ JONATHAN SMITH (COBRA) ■ MIKE HALLY (STAR WARS)

And the winner is...

COBRA **PLATFORM** ZX SPECTRUM **DEVELOPER** JONATHAN SMITH **YEAR** 1986



Most of our awards have been given to films that are both popular and good. That's not a coincidence – those factors directly influence the likelihood of a game being licensed. It's fair to say that *Cobra* was not a particularly good film, being a typical Eighties action outing that takes itself just a bit too seriously. However it was bound to get licensed as it starred Sylvester Stallone, whose drawing power was at its peak after *Rocky IV* and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* took over $600 million at the box office in 1985.

This presented a problem. Who would be able to take a weak film and improve on it? Fortunately for Spectrum owners everywhere, Ocean gave *Cobra* to the late Jonathan "Joffa" Smith. Working on a film licence for the first time, Joffa's approach was to adapt the film very loosely. As a result, *Cobra* featured some wonderfully bizarre references to the source material, with weapon duration represented by a duck and power-ups contained in burgers. There's even a 'murder' button!

The game was also technically impressive, achieving smooth parallax scrolling stages on the Speccy. A large number of sprites were sent into battle too, with your hero often facing multiple hostile enemies, their projectiles and runaway prams (yes, really). It was a lot of fun to play, thanks to tight controls and a good variety of power-ups. There was a good chance that the game would sell regardless of its quality, but Joffa still delivered an excellent game – and that's why he wins this award.



BEST SOUND DESIGN

THE NOMINEES: ALIEN 3 (MEGA DRIVE) ■ JURASSIC PARK (MEGA-CD) ■ JAWS UNLEASHED (PS2) ■ ALIENS (VARIOUS)

And the winner is…

ALIENS **PLATFORM** VARIOUS **DEVELOPER** ELECTRIC DREAMS **YEAR** 1987



The original *Alien*'s famous tag line was "In space no one can hear you scream." In *Aliens*, you won't hear anyone scream either. But then again, you just didn't need to. *Aliens* had a minimalistic approach to sound effects, but one that fit the atmosphere of the series perfectly.

Playing the commander, you alternate between first-person views of your six crew members and direct them around the colony base. You can wait around as long as you like in the opening areas – you have to make the first move. The tension begins to build after the first few empty rooms. You haven't encountered anything yet, but you know it's only a matter of time.

Your proximity meter starts to wail, as you spin the viewpoint frantically in an attempt to spot the alien before it spots you. Having tracked it down, you let loose a shot – only to miss by a hair. Panic sets in as the alien turns and charges straight toward you, with the horrible wailing continuing. It reaches you, and… nothing.

Not precisely nothing, though. With the signal cut, the transmission from the crew member's camera turns to static and white noise fills the speakers. No further elaboration is necessary. That's the genius of the sound design in *Aliens*.



BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE

THE NOMINEES: SWEET HOME (FAMICOM) ■ GUNHED (PC ENGINE) ■ GAMERA 2000 (PSONE) ■ BATMAN (PC ENGINE)

And the winner is…

SWEET HOME **PLATFORM** FAMICOM **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM **YEAR** 1989



©Evan-Amos



In recent years, *Sweet Home* has become known in the Western world as a precursor to *Resident Evil* and the wider survival-horror genre. However, the fact that *Sweet Home* is a licensed game tends to be mentioned only in passing, if at all. This is a shame, because *Sweet Home* is a fantastic example of a licensed game. Director Kurosawa supervised development, an unusually hands-on approach for a licensed game of the era. This contributed to the game's successful use of cut-scenes, including the 'opening door' animation that carried over to *Resident Evil*, as well as some pretty gruesome deaths which wouldn't have passed Nintendo's strict Western content requirements of the time.

While the game gives you the same premise as the movie, *Sweet Home* takes advantage of the differences between the two. The rest of the story needs to be uncovered by the player, by examining diary entries and frescos found around the mansion. Everyone can make it out alive too, unlike the movie, but character deaths are permanent. With every character carrying a unique item, each loss increases the tension as the game becomes harder.

On the carpet with…

DUNCAN BOTWOOD

Game designer, GoldenEye 007



How much access did you have to the film?
We were given a copy of the shooting script, which as it turned out wasn't the final form that was shot but was close enough for us that it made little difference… Also we finally got the game out a year after the film, so we were able to tweak lines that were no longer relevant. There weren't all that many of them. We were given style guides and photos of props and actors, and we did our best to make the game elements as similar as we could to those sources, given the limitations.

Looking back are there any levels you feel don't work as well?
I wasn't so happy with a couple of my multiplayer levels, since they were bashed together in very short order. They could have used more refinement and testing time. The single player levels had more time, love and attention so they stand up better. St Petersburg Streets was very simplistic, but the tank was a lot of fun.

How closely did you follow the film?
The console and the tech gave us a shot at trying to recreate the film experience in 3D rather than the 2D platformer film tie-ins that normally appeared. We mined the script and photo references for level ideas, I used the set blueprints to recreate sections of the Facility and added other rooms inspired by other shots of that location in the film. On one or two occasions we either expanded on locations that were only fleetingly visited in the film or outright made something up to fill a gap.

What's the most important thing to consider when making a film licence?
To be true to the spirit of the film rather than following the script slavishly. The experiences of film and game are really very different, and I cannot see why you'd want a playable copy of the film. There is more mileage in exploring other parts of the story or other characters. Vin Diesel and Starbreeze understood that very well with *Riddick*, and they made an excellent game as a result.

BEST PICTURE

THE NOMINEES: GOLDENEYE 007 (N64) ■ STAR WARS (ARCADE) ■ ROBOCOP (VARIOUS) ■ BATMAN: THE MOVIE (VARIOUS)

And the winner is…

GOLDENEYE 007

PLATFORM N64 **DEVELOPER** RARE **YEAR** 1997



Here's a popular late-Nineties cocktail for you. Take two shots of Britain's most famous secret agent, add Rare to taste and serve shaken – not stirred. James Bond always had the potential for good licensed games, given the fast cars, gadgets and guns, but Rare's hit wasn't merely good – it was a phenomenon.

GoldenEye 007 arrived unusually late for a licensed game, almost two years after the movie was released. Players quickly learned why – Rare had spent that time crafting a first-person shooter that was unparalleled in the console market.

The game featured expansive maps with multiple concurrent objectives, often allowing players freedom to pursue them in any order. An important part of the game's success was that while Rare had access to a wide variety of reference materials from the film, the team took artistic licence with its adaptation in order to make the best game possible. The iconic opening mission on the Byelomorye Dam is a perfect example of this – the entire stage was based on a 90-second sequence at the beginning of the film. Later levels were faithful to the film when possible, and adapted or even invented to suit the needs of the game. The end result was a truly entertaining game.

Goldeneye's use of weaponry – including many fictionalised versions of Bond's favoured firearms – was also exceptional, with standouts including the RCP90 and a tank. The gadgets even made an appearance, with mines memorably activated by Bond's wristwatch. Perhaps most memorable was the appearance of the Golden Gun, a multiplayer star that killed any enemy in a single shot.

Although *Goldeneye* lacks many features that are modern genre standards, such as dual analogue control and regenerating health, the impact it had is hard to overstate. It is arguably the first important first-person shooter to be released on a console and included a pioneering split-screen deathmatch mode, which single-handedly justified the N64's four control ports – all the more impressive, as multiplayer was a late addition to the game. The Bond-themed match types were an inspired addition, with the likes of You Only Live Twice and The Man With The Golden Gun proving both fun and self-explanatory.

GoldenEye's success was so great that it has since developed a reputation that is totally independent from the movie it was based on. Subsequent Bond licensees EA and Activision have attempted to capitalise on its popularity since, with the latter releasing a remake of the game over a decade after the release of the movie. That kind of impact is why it easily nabs our Best Picture award.





» [N64] Oh come on. Did you really think that anything else was going to win this?

» [N64] Facility is another of the greats, a level that never gets old. 'Beg your pardon, forgot to knock'.




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Einhänder

SQUARE DOESN'T JUST MAKE AWESOME RPGS...

» PlayStation
» Square
» 1997

Square isn't known for stepping outside its comfort zone, so many will be surprised to learn that it made this rather excellent shooter in 1997.

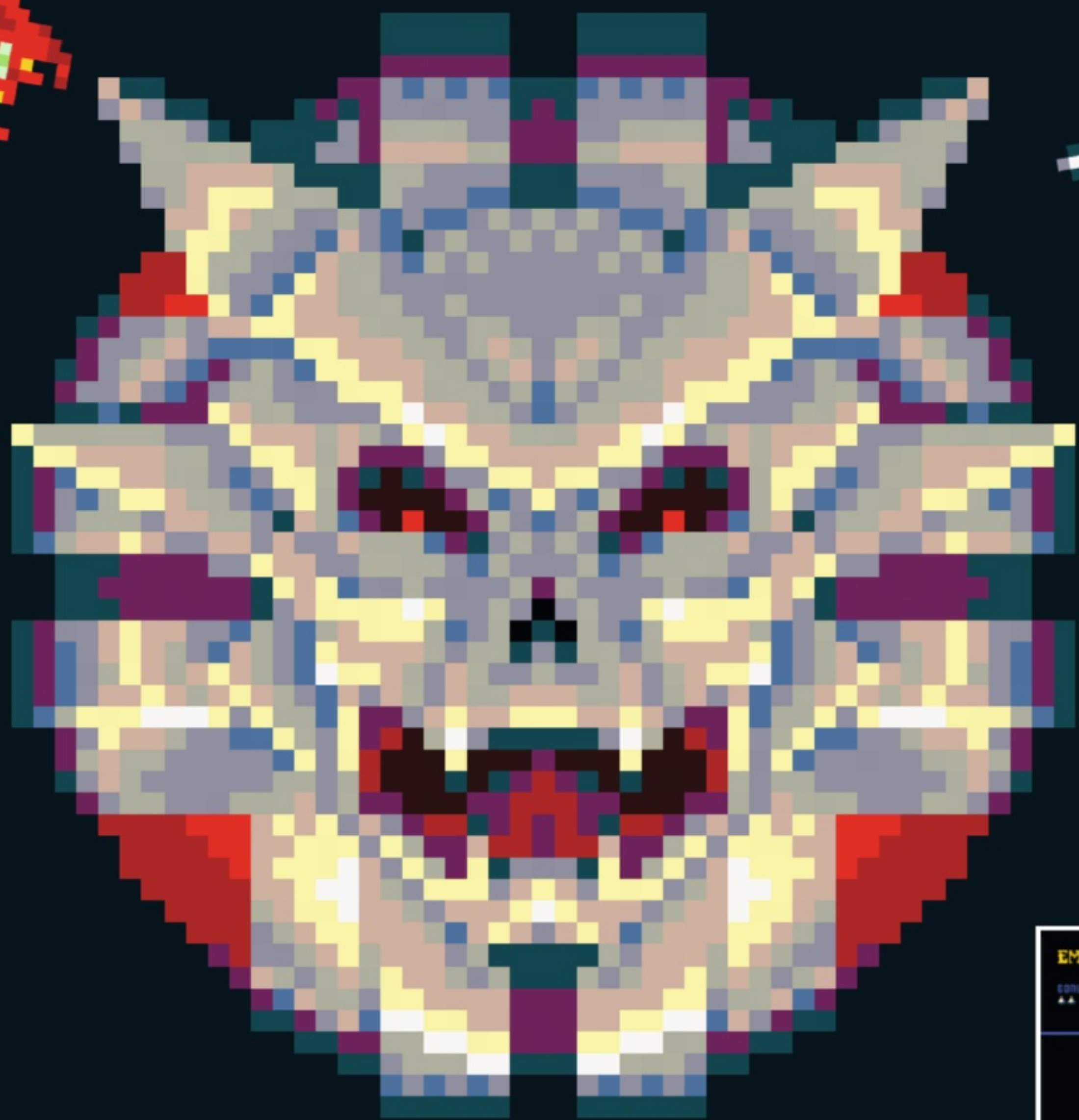
At first it feels a world apart from Square's previous work, but you soon realise it's a typical Square game. It's most noticeable in the story; a neat, if rather brief retelling of an old Grecian tale, although Earth and the Moon now step in for Endymion and Selene. The aesthetics are distinctly Square-like as well, with interesting design choices that capture both East and West. Add in an epic soundtrack by Kenichiro Fukui and some truly gigantic, cleverly designed bosses and suddenly *Einhänder* doesn't seem like quite an odd game for Square to release after all.

Like *R-Type Delta* before it, *Einhänder* is a 2.5D shooter and a damn fine one, thanks to some extremely good level design, an interesting selection of big, meaty weapons and plenty of big over-the-top boss battles to get stuck into. The stages look fantastic as well, kicking off with a neon-tinged skyline that feels straight out of *Blade Runner*, before heading off into the ether for an assault on a gigantic mothership that culminates with it spewing out yet another boss to battle. The variety continues, and while it's a little drab at times, the imagination packed into each stage is to be commended.

It's a little too hard for its own good at times, but *Einhänder* remains an exceptionally good shooter. And if the bottom ever falls out of the RPG market, at least Square has something to fall back on.

"The movie Alien was an inspiration for Sinistar. It was very much a space horror game"

Noah Falstein



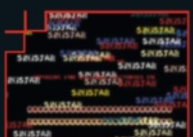


» [Arcade] Knowing that the Sinistar was always under construction gave a sense of urgency to your mining endeavours.



The Making of SINISTAR

"Beware, I live!" was a phrase that struck fear into the hearts of arcade gamers in the early Eighties. Noah Falstein and John Newcomer recall the creation of Sinistar, while Paul Drury runs like a coward…



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** WILLIAMS

» **DEVELOPER:** WILLIAMS

» **RELEASED:** 1982

» **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS

» **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

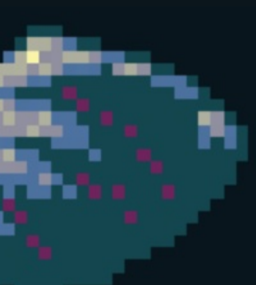
Williams was lost in space. It was early 1982 and the company, which had entered the videogame business with such a bang the year before thanks to *Defender* and *Stargate*, was looking to follow up these huge successes with another space-themed shooter. Things weren't going to plan, though. Working alone, engineer Sam Dicker had created the bare bones – a top-down view of a ship whizzing through an expanse of scrolling open space – but he was unsure of which direction to take next. It was a spaceship in search of a game.

"*Sinistar* was a weird project," chuckles John Newcomer, employed by Williams in 1981 as one of the industry's first full-time game designers. "It started before I even got to the company and so many people had their hands in it. Sam was trying to evolve his basic idea but he was just stuck."

Mike Stroll, President of Williams, decided to take command. He called an off-site brainstorming meeting with a dozen of his key people, including Bill Pfutzenreuter and Jan Hendricks, who had recently collaborated with John on innovative flap-'em-up, *Joust*. "Mike said, 'how are we going to get this game moving again?'" recalls John. "A bunch of ideas came out of that meeting. I threw out the ones I didn't like, kept the ones I thought were promising and put them all together as a concept with the working title 'Juggernaut'."

Retro Gamer is fortunate to be the proud custodian of that original design document. Its ten hand-written pages are a fascinating relic of that golden era of arcade innovation, where imagination pushed the emerging technology into brave new worlds of gameplay. Though some of the ideas laid out in this bold plan never made the finished game (see '*Sinistar*'s Secret Plans'), the outline for *Juggernaut* is surprisingly close to the game *Sinistar* would eventually become. A lone ship is stranded in a hostile space, aware that a huge alien vessel is under construction nearby. The pilot must mine crystals from planetoids, which in turn are transformed into powerful bombs, the only weapon that can harm the evil mothership. An arms race ensues between a fleet of enemy Worker ships, who steal crystals to construct the juggernaut, and the player, who must stockpile enough Sinibombs to destroy it once it becomes fully functional and commences pursuit. This balancing of priorities for the player – dealing with the ever-present danger of hostile Warrior ships and their deadly bullets, whilst trying to gather enough crystals to deal with the greater, future threat of the ominous Sinistar itself – created a compelling gameplay mechanic. Yet even the best-laid plans of mining and menace needed a confident leader to bring them to fruition.

"When Williams had their next round of hiring programmers, they took on a guy called Noah Falstein," smiles John.

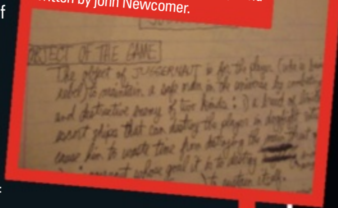


SINISTAR'S SECRET PLANS

Here at Retro Gamer, we have pored over the original design document for Juggernaut, the project that evolved into Sinistar, and discovered some fascinating gameplay ideas that never made it into the final game. We assess five of them here…

NEED AN ESCORT?

■ The design document outlines three types of enemy ships: Workers, which made it into the released version; Miners, which evolved into Warrior ships; and Escort ships, which never made the final cut. These "fast fighters" would protect Worker ships as they transported crystals back to the Juggernaut construction site but would also "group into [a] formation of eight or more in an organised attack on the player". Bonus points were to be awarded for destroying all of an offensive fleet.



» The original design document for the game that would become *Sinistar*, hand-written by john Newcomer.

BEWARE THEY LIVE!

■ Taking on a single Sinistar proved to be a major challenge in the released game but the original idea was to have multiple Juggernauts under construction. This tied in with the plan to have each Juggernaut piloted by a Warlord, who could make good his escape by alighting on a partially-constructed mothership and hide within her metallic sanctuary. It's an interesting concept, though having numerous threats to manage would perhaps have been too big an ask of players.



I AM THE UNIVERSE!

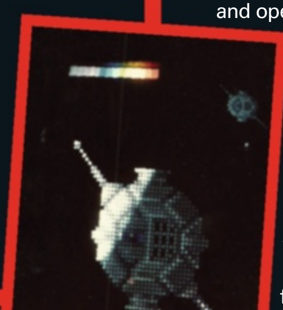
■ The final page of the document is especially entertaining, as it suggests another 13 phrases for Sinistar to taunt the player with beyond the six that ultimately made it into the game. We really like the megalomaniacal 'I am the universe!' and the playground jibe of 'See Spot run' but we're not sure such quips as 'Fight me' add much to the sense of an all-powerful foe. And 'You hurt me' just makes the Sinistar sound a bit crap.

COME ON, CHASE ME

■ The most intriguing feature not to make the final game was the premise that each Juggernaut was actually piloted by a Warlord. If the player successfully destroyed the mothership, the Warlord would flee in an escape pod in search of the safety of a new Juggernaut, leading to "a high speed chase". We love the idea of turning the tables on this cowardly mastermind, pursuing him through the asteroid soup, trying to blast him before he can sit smugly within a new metal monster. The cad.

IN SPACE, NO-ONE EATS ICE CREAM

■ Once construction of the Juggernaut was complete, the plan was to give it the unnerving ability to "shoot out a short-range but accurate freeze ray from the skull's mouth. The ray is like a crackling doughnut that engulfs the object it touches, immobilises it and drags it into the skull's mouth." We rather like the idea of an icy death ray which could be used to destroy crystal-filled asteroids.



» An **RG** Exclusive: a very early graphic from *Juggernaut* before it evolved into *Sinistar*.



» [Arcade] Being crushed in the jaws of the Sinistar was a particularly gruesome way to die.

"They assigned him to *Juggernaut* and the rest is history. He just got it. He took it over and made it his own."

"I was very grateful to John for being so gracious with his concept, handing it to me and letting me do what I wanted with it," laughs Noah, who joined Williams in May 1982 and took on the role of project leader. "He showed me a portfolio of at least five or ten game concepts and I just latched onto *Juggernaut*. As John explained the idea for the game, I remember thinking that the sense of impending doom as this monster gets assembled felt perfect for that time. We wanted to give players a quick and intense gameplay experience so we could get their next coin in the slot!"

As John moved into a more managerial role at Williams, overseeing art and game design across numerous in-house projects, Noah began assembling his crew to fire up the engines on *Juggernaut*. Sam Dicker remained a key team member, taking charge of the tools and operating system for the game. RJ Mical, who would go on to find fame as co-creator of both the Amiga and Atari's handheld the Lynx, was next to climb aboard after being personally interviewed by Noah. Programmer Richard Witt and Jack Hagar, whose artistic vision would prove crucial to the ultimate look of *Sinistar*, soon followed. "Jack was the first full-time artist I'd worked with who had fine arts training," explains Noah. "He showed me how to do shading by selecting a colour palette of light and dark hues and give the sense of a light source reflecting off the asteroids and ships to give the impression of a 3D space. In the version we had before he came along, the Sinistar was a sepulchral floating skull – a flat two-dimensional rendition. Jack used Samurai masks as an inspiration for the angularity of the Sinistar. He transformed things."

The deep space setting for the game was also transforming from a dark and lonely asteroid belt into a vibrant, if hostile, ecosystem. Worker ships would hover expectantly as the player mined precious crystals from planetoids, snaffling any that might drift their way and dashing off to deliver them to the construction site of the ravenous Sinistar. The firepower of patrolling Warrior ships provided a constant threat to the player, yet they weren't averse to a little moonlighting as miners. "The biggest piece of coding I did and what I was most proud of was the artificial intelligence of the enemies, figuring out how to balance the various tasks," grins Noah. "The Warrior ships would attack you but a detail would always be left guarding the Sinistar and some would be sent off to mine an asteroid by firing into it. The workers had a bunch of different tasks, too. They'd go and pick up any floating crystals but some would follow asteroids, waiting for a Warrior to come by and start shooting

at it. Coordinating all that with a 1MHz processor that was also running all the graphics… I mean, in some of those later levels, there can be 20 or 30 Worker and Warrior ships around. That's a lot of thinking to do!"

The project was certainly demanding, as the team pushed the limited hardware and tried to live up to the considerable expectations of Williams's management. With former company darlings Eugene Jarvis and Larry DeMar having left to set up on their own as Vid Kidz, there was tangible pressure for Noah's team to deliver another hit game now that the creators of *Defender* had gone freelance. Indeed, it was Ken Fedesna, director of engineering, who came up with the interesting suggestion that the project should have a voice of its own.

"Williams had included speech in one of its pinball tables and Ken was eager to get speech into videogames, too," remembers Noah. "With *Sinistar* having such an identifiable character, it seemed like a perfect fit."

Anyone who's ever played the game will testify to the lasting impression of Sinistar's utterances. Hearing "Beware, I live!" can still induce an instinctive panic in players three decades later, knowing that the monster is awake and in relentless pursuit. Arcades of the early Eighties would resonate with "I hunger!", "Run coward!" and the blood-curdling roar as Sinistar closed in for the kill, even as your Sinibombs exploded in his leering countenance. "We brought in a guy called John Doremus, an old-school radio announcer in the Chicago area, to do the voice," recalls Noah. "He thought videogames were silly kids' stuff and it was hysterically funny hearing him say all these phrases that meant nothing to him. We wanted him to do the roar as well but he was awful. He tried but he sounded like a sick kitten. So one of our programmers called Python Angelo went to the zoo and recorded a lion…"

It's wholly apt that Sinistar's terrifying howl really was the cry of a ferocious beast. Being chased and consumed by the metallic monster – this boss didn't just blow up your ship, it crushed it between its mechanical jaws – tapped into a kind of primal fear. You were tiny and vulnerable; your pursuer was all-powerful, arrogantly goading you as he hunted you down. Even if you did destroy your mighty foe by discharging Sinibombs at just the right moment, it felt less like a victory and more like a narrow escape. "It was very much a space horror game," agrees Noah. "The movie *Alien* had come out a few years before and that was the inspiration behind this 'monsters in space' theme."

The speech in *Sinistar* was clearly a key factor in what made playing it such a memorable and unsettling experience. Noah could draw on his previous involvement with speech synthesis during his time experimenting with talking toys at Milton Bradley but animating the monster's mouth convincingly, so it appeared to be bellowing the taunts, proved more of a challenge. "We were having a terrible time trying to work out how many milliseconds to have Sinistar's mouth open or closed to be in sync with the speech," he notes. "Then Sam [Dicker] had this idea. He held a marker pen to his chin and went up to one of the whiteboards and walked from left to right, saying 'Beware I live!' and 'I hunger!' As he walked, it traced the movement of his chin on the board and we used those values in the game to make Sinistar's mouth move! I have this strong image of Sam having his face up against the whiteboard, looking completely silly imitating Sinistar, but it worked perfectly!'

The game was indeed shaping up nicely but before it went out on field testing, there was one more crucial decision to be made. Though the team all liked the name 'Juggernaut', a quick survey of Williams's staff revealed less than half of the people asked actually knew what the word meant. An alternative needed to be found and initially 'Dark Star' became the front-runner, leading to an in-house joke ▶



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

JOUST (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1982

KORONIS RIFT
SYSTEM: ATARI 800/C64
YEAR: 1985

INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE
SYSTEM: AMIGA/ST/PC
YEAR: 1989

> **"I remember seeing people playing it for the first time and when Sinistar showed up, they'd be so startled, they'd jump back from the controls"**

According to Noah the 'Sinistar Shuffle' was all the rage in 1982



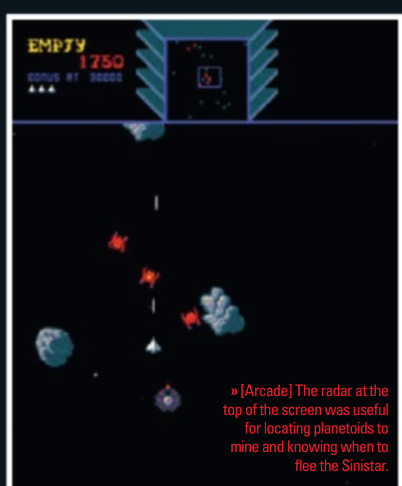
MINE CRAFT

Noah Falstein on the inspiration for mining planetoids in Sinistar

One of the unique features of *Sinistar* is the way your ship has to mine crystals from planetoids in order to convert them into vital Sinibombs. This is done through an unusual 'woodpecker' technique as your ship bounces and blasts against the asteroids, but this wasn't the first time Noah had simulated the mining process in game form. As part of his Bachelor of Arts degree, his senior year project was entitled 'Koronis Strike: A Computer Simulation Game of Mining and Combat in the Asteroid Belt'. "That was a big piece of why I was so excited about the project in the first place," he laughs. "It was close to this love of mine. The game I did back in school was never quite finished. I did the mining but never got round to doing the combat part. It was good to have both of those going on in *Sinistar*!" He would revisit the theme once more after joining Lucasfilm Games with *Koronis Rift* for the Atari 800, a fine shooter that was converted to the C64 by Ron 'Monkey Island' Gilbert.



» [Arcade] The army of Worker ships never tired of snaffling crystals and serving their monstrous master. Bet they weren't even on minimum wage.



» [Arcade] The radar at the top of the screen was useful for locating planetoids to mine and knowing when to flee the Sinistar.

MORE TERRIFYING BOSSES

The memorable mayors that still scare the living hell out of us



T-REX

FIRST SEEN: 3D MONSTER MAZE

■ You think you're all alone, wandering through a disorientating maze, unarmed and desperately searching for a way out. Then you receive an ominous warning on your ZX81. Rex lies in wait. Who? You continue trekking along the sombre corridors. Rex is hunting you. You quicken your step, intensely aware of your own vulnerability. Rex has seen you. What? I can't see him. Where is he? RUN! HE IS BEHIND YOU! Heart pounding, you flee but the jaws of that ravenous tyrannosaurus are bearing down on you and there's no escape. This is the granddaddy of survival horror.

> **"For Sinistar's roar, we went to the zoo and recorded a lion…"**
> Noah Falstein

DEMOGORGON

FIRST SEEN: FORBIDDEN FOREST

■ If you go down to the woods today you're sure of some very nasty surprises. This forest is forbidden for a good reason. It's full of mutated frogs, gigantic spiders and other such horrors but these are just a prelude to the Demogorgon himself. Glimpsed only when flashes of lightening briefly illuminate the midnight sky, he's a satanic swine to defeat. He returns in *Beyond The Forbidden Forest*, this time as a screen-filling demonic cave dweller that shoots fireballs from his eyes. And what are you armed with to slay this beast? Arrows. Cheers.



BARON VON BLUBBA

FIRST SEEN: BUBBLE BOBBLE

■ Captain Ahab had Moby-Dick, a great white whale he pursued relentlessly in Herman Melville's epic sea-faring tale. *Bubble Bobble* had Baron Von Blubba, a grinning, red-eyed white whale that pursued you relentlessly if the stage timer ran out in Taito's epic bubble-bursting tale. The doom-laden ditty that signalled his arrival was enough to instil an existential panic in players as they feverishly tried to complete the level before they became krill-substitute. Where's a harpoon when you need one?

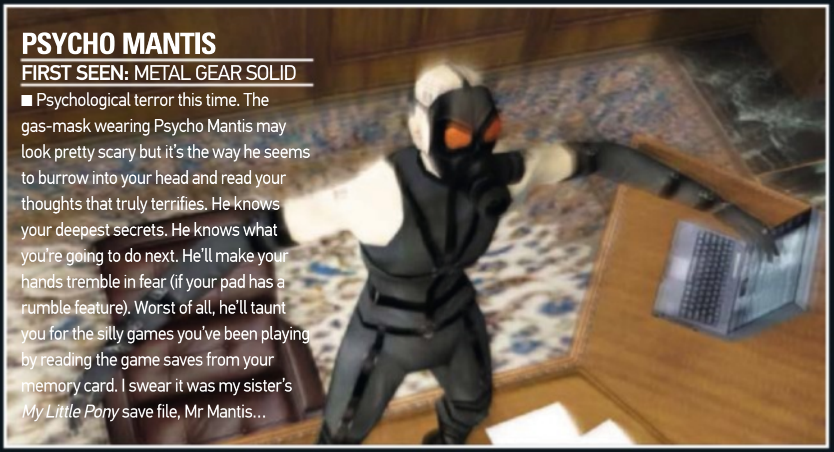




STEPHANIE

FIRST SEEN: CLOCK TOWER 2

■ We recognise this list is male-dominated, so time for a femme that's definitely fatal. Stephanie is seven years old and has a girlish giggle and big brown puppy dog eyes. She enjoys phoning people up and gleefully informing them she's going to murder them and is also partial to stabbing folks repeatedly in the chest with a dagger as big as her head. The *Clock Tower* games revel in repulsive enemies but Stephanie's unsettling mix of cute and creepy make her one of the PlayStation's most feared foes.



PSYCHO MANTIS

FIRST SEEN: METAL GEAR SOLID

■ Psychological terror this time. The gas-mask wearing Psycho Mantis may look pretty scary but it's the way he seems to burrow into your head and read your thoughts that truly terrifies. He knows your deepest secrets. He knows what you're going to do next. He'll make your hands tremble in fear (if your pad has a rumble feature). Worst of all, he'll taunt you for the silly games you've been playing by reading the game saves from your memory card. I swear it was my sister's *My Little Pony* save file, Mr Mantis…



PHALLUS BOSS

FIRST SEEN: GYNOUG

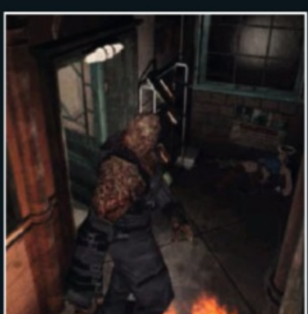
■ Some bosses are scary because they're invincible. Others terrify players due to sudden, pant-soiling entrances. This boss makes our list for being deeply disturbing. Look at him. You can't un-see some things, can you? One of a plethora of bizarre bosses in Japanese shooter *Gynoug* (released in the West as *Wings Of Wor*), this chap (and we're pretty sure it's the male of the species) resembles something HR Giger might scrawl on a toilet wall and is guaranteed to put the willies up Mega Drive gamers.



EVIL OTTO

FIRST SEEN: BERZERK

■ Don't be taken in by his grin, Evil Otto is imagining how well he can pummel you into a pulp. *Berzerk*'s creator Andrew McNeil named our villain after Dave Otto, head of security at Dave Nutting Associates, who would smile even as he mercilessly berated employees. Appearing suddenly if he deems you've taken too long to dispatch a room full of robots, this indestructible boss will hunt you down with his relentless bounce, cackling "kill the humanoid" as you run like a chicken…



NEMESIS

FIRST SEEN: RESIDENT EVIL 3

■ Here's a boss that just won't quit. The *Resident Evil* series boasts many nightmarish adversaries but there's something about the unrelenting Nemesis that is truly terrifying. He is the ultimate stalker, forever focussed on his prey, never far behind; like the Terminator with a nasty rash. Jill, you need to get a restraining order immediately.

DOBKERATOPS

FIRST SEEN: R-TYPE

■ As baddies go, this one is pretty big. Intimidatingly big. The shock of first encountering this reptilian Bydo boss, with its undulating tail, floating eyeballs and disgusting stomach-mouth leaves a lasting impression. Trapped in its lair, your ship suddenly feels very small and blasting your way past this serpentine horror is hugely satisfying. Then you realise Dobkeratops is just the boss of level one of *R-Type*…

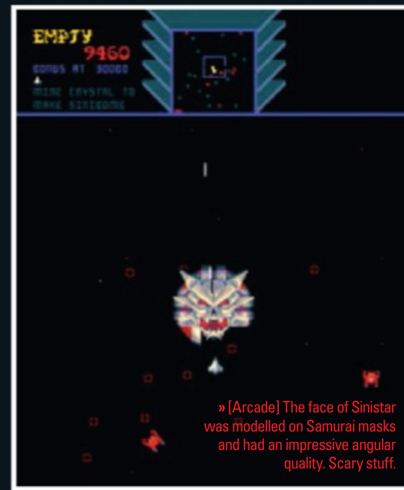


» [Arcade] The game's AI meant you could watch Sinistar being constructed in real time by those diligent Worker ships.





» [Arcade] Warrior ships were equipped with accurate cannons. Dispatch them as soon as they enter your space.



» [Arcade] The face of Sinistar was modelled on Samurai masks and had an impressive angular quality. Scary stuff.

that the game should be entitled 'Opie-Star', as the phrase 'Run coward!' sounded uncannily like Sinistar was shouting the name 'Ron Howard', who starred as Opie Taylor in Sixties sitcom *The Andy Griffith Show* before playing cardigan model Richie Cunningham in *Happy Days*. Finally, they settled on *Sinistar*, which kept the word 'Star' in the title (do not underestimate the power of The Force in sales terms), whilst hinting at the malevolent nature of the beast the player must battle. "Plus I'm notorious for loving puns," quips Noah.

The game first entered arcades towards the end of 1982 and had a four wave looping structure. After defeating the first Sinistar, the player faced Worker, Warrior and Planetoid waves, each featuring an increased number of the titular foes, before encountering the Void zone, where the scarcity of asteroids made accumulating Sinibombs a serious challenge. However, such was the difficulty level of the game that few casual players progressed much further than defeating the first Sinistar. "That was our biggest disappointment," sighs Noah. "Originally, the game wasn't quite as hard. We had tuned it to give you about another minute before it really got intense and we felt that was the optimum fun point for the game. We did some tests and it just wasn't earning enough money compared to our other games. Management said, 'you've gotta kill people off quicker!' The only real way to do that was upping the difficulty."

Noah also shares his disappointment that the game was released just as the videogame crash really started to bite. Alongside dramatic industry decline and widespread redundancies at Williams through 1983, he estimates the game sold around 5,000 units, a respectable number given the circumstances but dwarfed by the 50,000 *Stargate* machines shifted barely a year earlier. However, Noah takes some comfort in the enduring affection gamers have for *Sinistar*. "I appreciate that it has a cult following well beyond its numerical sales. The people who do remember it remember it with strong emotions. It's not just, 'Oh I played that game', it's like, 'oh *Sinistar*!' And they launch into 'Beware, I live!' or 'Run coward!', It's very gratifying."

Noah remained at Williams until the end of 1983 before leaving the arcade business with *Sinistar* as his sole coin-op. He went on to enjoy a successful career in the games industry, producing such memorable titles as *Indiana Jones And The Fate of Atlantis*, but there was a time when he wondered whether he would ever surpass his debut. "The first story Isaac Asimov published was called *Nightfall* and even though he wrote hundreds of stories in his lifetime, people would refer to it as the best one he ever wrote. I did worry that I'd peaked early with *Sinistar*, too, and it was all downhill after that! That feeling did ease when I started making games for Lucasfilm, though…"

Noah's still making games, currently as chief game designer at Google and, in a sweet bit of circularity, he shares an office with his old *Sinistar* collaborator RJ Mical, so we can't resist asking him if he has ever contemplated revisiting the game. He explains he was contacted by a Dutch developer when Midway was selling off the rights to IP it owned and agreed to work on a reboot but heard nothing more. He's also sceptical after the less than scintillating *Sinistar: Unleashed* was released in 1999, a game he describes as 'misguided'.

"I'd be hesitant in case I'd be dredging up old things that were good when they were first done, but now…" he says, letting his voice drift away. "I remember seeing people playing it for the first time in 1982 and when *Sinistar* showed up, they'd be so startled they'd jump back from the controls and be instantly destroyed. But their reaction was always to get really angry and put in another quarter, determined to kill that thing that was taunting them. Maybe I should talk to RJ but, you know, I wouldn't want to cloud people's memories…"

If Noah and RJ ever do decide to make *Sinistar* live once more, you'll hear **RG** screaming about it…

Many thanks to Noah, John, RJ and Martyn for their help with this feature.

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come



INFO

- **Featured System:** Wii
- **Year:** 2011
- **Publisher:** Nintendo
- **Developer:** Monolith Soft
- **Key People:** Tetsuya Takahashi

GO DEEPER

- **Originally announced as *Monado: Beginning Of The World*, the game was renamed *Xenoblade* (with the *Chronicles* suffix in the West) to honour the involvement and vision of *Xenogears*/ *Xenosaga* lynchpin Tetsuya Takahashi.**
- ***Xenoblade*'s US release looked shaky for a while – despite what Nintendo may say now, the creation of fan movement Operation Rainfall was pivotal in securing an American launch for the game.**



» [Wii] Yeah, you can explore all of that. Don't stray too far before you're sufficiently levelled up, though.

39. XENOBLADE CHRONICLES

So somehow, one of the most hardcore JRPGs ever made ended up on one of the most casual consoles ever made. Luke Albigés returns to an adventure that fully deserves to sit among the greats

THE BACKGROUND

Five years into the Wii's life, many developers looking to make traditional or hardcore games had all but abandoned the Nintendo console – with even great games like Platinum's *MadWorld* and Capcom's *Zack & Wiki* underperforming to catastrophic degrees, it looked to be a platform where only first-party franchises and throwaway dancing games could make money. Undeterred by the cold, hard facts, Monolith Soft continued its trend for favouring Nintendo consoles and development continued on *Monado: Beginning Of The World* – a Wii title coming so late in the day that many expected it to be among the last great Wii games.

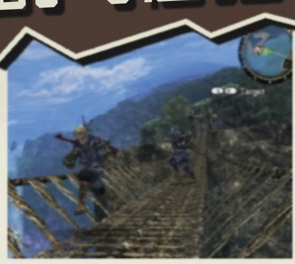
And many were right – an original RPG set on the bodies of two fallen gods, it offered freedom of exploration, battle mechanics and an overarching narrative that put its peers to shame. Aside from a few standout titles like *Eternal Sonata*, this was not a great generation for the Japanese RPG but *Xenoblade* was proof enough that there was still plenty of life in the genre when the developer in charge has something interesting to say. The Xeno-prefix isn't a sign of a continued universe or even franchise – it's a badge of quality, and it's one that *Xenoblade* polished to a glorious sheen not seen since the glory of PlayStation RPG *Xenogears*.

THE GAME

Forget characters – it's the sword that's the real star here, a legendary blade known as the Monado that precious few can wield. Main hero Shulk is the latest in line to enjoy its power, and his slow acceptance and comprehension of the blade's power is as interesting a journey to be a part of as any other the genre has thrown up over the years. This is thanks in no small part to the supporting cast, mind. Friendly meathead Reyn and the feisty Fiora are your only buddies to begin with, but the party grows as per genre tradition as the adventure draws on – Shulk is later joined by the Monado's

Things of note











Vision Express

Shulk's visions of the future aren't just a narrative device – they also work in battle, where they allow you to read and react to an enemy's most devastating attacks.

Open world

While big league rival *Final Fantasy XIII* elected to throw players down a 20-hour corridor, *Xenoblade*'s world is fully open for players to explore at their leisure.

Bigger is better

A large part of the game is about rebuilding your base camp, which is a great source of materials and new quests as it is slowly returned to its former glory.

To pay the bills

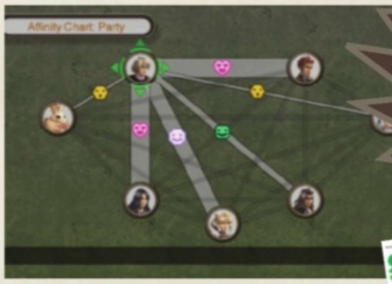
Battle skills are coded using icons and colours to suggest which work well in tandem with others. Positioning is also key to getting the most out of some of the abilities.

Run away!

As in the excellent *Final Fantasy XII* and many MMOs, most areas are populated by monsters of all levels – watch out for the overpowered ones or you'll quickly wind up dead.



» [Wii] The British voice track means that one of the bosses talks like a Cockney bouncer. Which is excellent.



» [Wii] Affinity is important, if only because it opens up missions and events that you won't see otherwise.



» [Wii] Monolith Soft is far from stingy when it comes to handing out new gear…

What the press thought



games™
Score: 9/10
"This ludicrously expansive game world (set on the bodies of two defunct titans) is fascinating to explore."

Eurogamer
Score: 9/10
"A game that invites us to reassess an entire genre, pointing to a bold future while nodding its respect towards the past."

previous owner, Dunban, princess Melia, sniper/medic Sharla and the token odd creature thing, Riki.

The main narrative isn't the only story being told here, either. As relations grow and blossom between party members, mini-stories come to light in the form of short side quests and special cut-scenes that will only play out when affinity hits a certain level. It's as good a reason to keep switching up party members as you're likely to find in an RPG – the more friendly your party members are with one another, the more content you'll have access to. Some of these are daft (but hey, like dating Barrett in *FFVII* wasn't…) but others are truly touching. And others involve Riki, but you can sort of ignore those ones unless you really like being squeaked at.

It's not even the characters or their relationships that have the most impact, rather the sprawling and beautiful open world that's yours to explore from the get-go. *Xenoblade* does scale like pretty much no other game on Wii, its lush landscapes (which range from thick jungle canopies to sparse desert wastlelands, all set on the bodies of two giant and long-defunct Bionis) expanding for miles and ensuring that only the most adventurous will ever chart the entire map. Seemingly innocuous paths and passes can lead to huge new areas teeming with lives to end or save, with all the rewards you'd expect for doing so.

While you can play with a Wii Remote, you'd be a fool to do so – a classic RPG such as this deserves the Classic Controller treatment, especially with such a deep and complex combat system to master. The mix of action, strategy, planning and combos makes for a system that is incredibly daunting at first but quickly becomes satisfying and rewarding, particularly once Shulk's visions start to have an effect on combat and key boss attacks must be countered or cancelled before the ticking clock crushes one of your party members. Unique, oddly beautiful and one of the best RPGs of its generation, *Xenoblade* deserves the legacy it is sure to receive.

Why it's a future classic

With all the shovelware and mini-game nonsense that drowned the Wii, owners were always holding out for that one game that proved that the console was capable of something more. While that game came along a few times, there's no better example of a gamers' game on a console designed for an entirely different market than this. Many will remember *Xenoblade* for this reason alone – it was one of the few what the Wii was truly capable of, both on technical and gameplay levels. Monolith Soft could have targeted the significantly more powerful PS3 or Xbox 360, but the game simply wouldn't have had the same impact on those platforms. It had to be on the Wii, and the history books will concur that this was the right choice. As great as it may be, *Xenoblade* simply wouldn't be *Xenoblade* if it were on any other console – if anything, those visuals will stand up better over time given the platform than those of many similar JRPGs on PS3 and 360…



» [Wii] Gear is visible on characters, which can make for some… interesting outfits.

ATARI 8-BIT

35 YEARS YOUNG



Atari's 8-bit computer range was produced for 13 years and introduced the world to many firsts in home computing. So why is it largely ignored by the gaming masses today? Kieren Hawken finds out what made these systems so special

Many people remember Atari for the hugely popular 2600 VCS console, but the development of its first home computer started before the iconic woodgrain system even hit the shelves. When Atari's Cyan Engineering Research Centre was designing the 2600 in 1975 it felt that the system would only have a commercial life of about three years, so was already thinking about a successor. The new design would retain many of the features of the 2600 but would be far less limited and contain advanced graphics and sound chips along with much more memory. This new system was scheduled in for a 1979 release and Atari management had identified two gaps in the market it wanted to fill; a low-end machine aimed primarily at gamers and a high-end offering that would take the form of a powerful computer.

These machines were nicknamed Colleen and Candy, after two Atari secretaries, and would be compatible with each other despite several differences. Although Candy was initially envisaged as a games console it would actually feature a full membrane keyboard, much like the one later found on Sinclair's ZX81, making it ideal for kids as it could just be wiped clean. It would have a cartridge slot, joystick ports and could be connected straight to a TV. Colleen would be much more professional with a proper typewriter-style keyboard, duel cartridge ports, both TV and monitor output and user-accessible expansion slots. They would also feature different memory configurations. Both machines were planned to ship with a version of Microsoft BASIC in ROM, although this ended up being completely re-written as Atari BASIC and was included on cartridge initially.

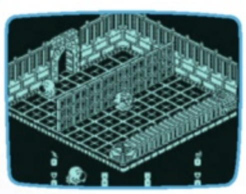
Development of the system continued throughout 1977 and 1978 with the main focus on the new version of the TIA chip (Television Interface Adapter). The new chip would be called the CTIA, with the C standing for Colour, and would be one of several new custom chips to feature in the machine. It would sit along side ANTIC (Alphanumeric Television Interface Controller), which was there to generate conventional graphics in several different modes with variations in colour support and resolution. Like the TIA chip in the 2600, the new CTIA was there to generate sprites, which Atari itself called player missile graphics, but had been expanded to also provide the colour for ANTIC's playfields (hence the C). The idea was that CTIA and ANTIC would work in unison to provide arcade-quality visuals.

The CTIA was replaced two years later by the GTIA (with the G standing for graphics) that added extra colour abilities to the machine. This was actually the original design but the chip revision was delayed so much that Atari had no choice but to ship with CTIA. The third ▶


BMX SIMULATOR


DARK CHAMBERS

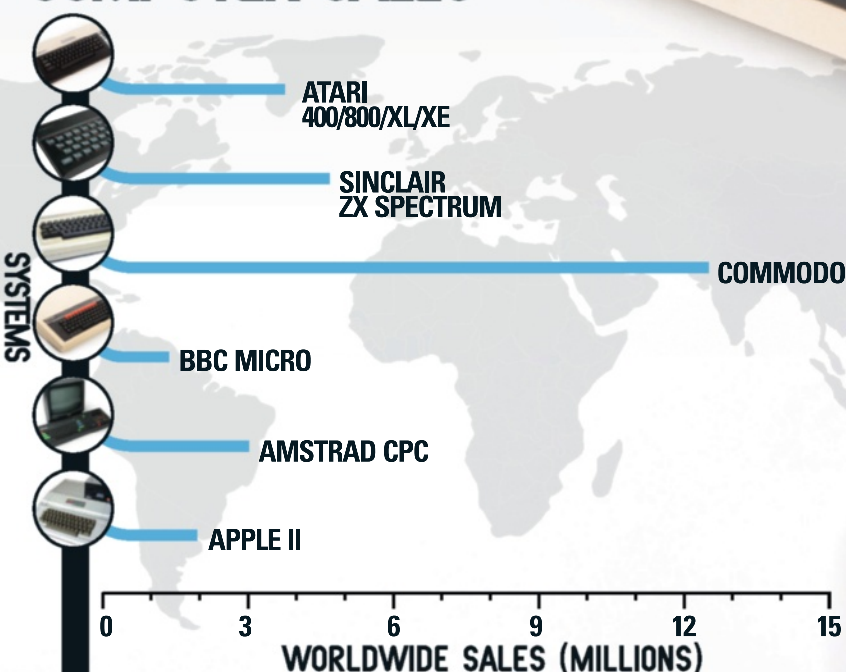

FIGHT NIGHT


HEAD OVER HEELS


PANTHER



8-BIT COMPUTER SALES







PERIPHERAL
■ This is the SIO port for connecting up your disk drive, tape player, modem or printer.

PARALLEL BUS
■ Otherwise known as the expansion port, this could be used to add extra memory.

MONITOR
■ Pretty self-explanatory this one! Used to connect to a monitor.

TV
■ For connecting your computer to the TV via a standard RF cable.

POWER
■ This is where you plug in the Atari 8-bit's external power supply unit.

▶ custom chip to make up the design was the famous POKEY (POtentiometer and KEYboard). This would be responsible for reading the keyboard, controllers and serial communications as well as providing four-channel sound among several other functions. This chip was designed by none other than Doug Neubauer, who is most famous for later coding the system's first 'killer app', *Star Raiders*. POKEY had a very distinctive sound and with its added versatility it became a mainstay of Atari's arcade machines throughout the early Eighties. Another innovation of the new Atari 8-bit computers (or A8 as they became to be known) was the SIO, which stood for Serial Input Output, and was the true predecessor to today's USB slot. SIO provided a daisy-chainable system that allowed multiple, auto-configuring devices to connect to the computer through a single connector. Each peripheral would have its own built-in drivers with Atari's own disk operating system built into the ROM to handle disk drives. Atari DOS was menu driven, another innovation for the time, making it very easy to use.

The two machines were finally announced officially in December 1978 and would be called the Atari 400 and Atari 800. The names referred to amount of memory included in each of them, 4k of RAM in the 400 and 8k in the 800. However, by the time the two computers actually shipped in 1979 RAM prices had fallen so much that they included 8k in both machines. With prices continuing to fall Atari soon upgraded the 800 to the full 48k by filling all its internal expansion slots. The 400 actually proved to be the far more successful machine outselling its sibling by two to one, mainly down to the high price of the 800. This meant that software companies largely targeted the lower-end machine, meaning the 800's extra cartridge port and memory was rarely used. Although the machines were selling well, the price point proved to be a stumbling block for Atari when compared to its rivals. Both computers were expensive to make and Atari soon realised that it needed to come up with a cheaper solution, especially with the advent of new low cost similarly-specced machines like the Commodore 64, MSX and (in Europe) the Sinclair ZX Spectrum.

Atari's eventual answer to this problem, after several different ideas, was the 1200XL. A 64k computer with a new ROM that included a self-test, new function keys and new connectors that saw the cartridge port moved to the side of the machine. The changes to the operating system meant that the 1200XL suffered from a multitude of compatibility problems that saw it widely criticised by the computing press of the time. Consumers were equally unimpressed and continued to buy the previous incarnations of the A8 instead. The machine was withdrawn in June 1983 without ever setting foot on European soil. But Atari did see hope in the XL idea and decided to redesign it again in order to better satisfy the needs of the public. They also needed to come up with something quickly as the market was being taken over by Commodore and its price war with Texas Instruments.

Atari announced four new versions of the XL at the 1983 summer CES. Each of these would fill a different gap in the market from a budget offering to a high-end business-oriented machine. The 600XL was the base machine and featured a compact design along with 16k of memory. Next up was the 800XL that used a deeper version of the 600 case and 64k of RAM. The 1400 and 1450 would both add a built-in 300-baud modem, plus a voice synthesiser with the 1450XLD and a built-in double-sided floppy disk drive. Further machines were



» The entire Atari 8-bit range was capable of playing cartridge, disk and tape-based games.

ATARI 8-BIT EXCLUSIVES



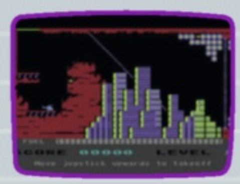
CAVERNS OF MARS
■ ATARI ■ 1981

This early title can best be described as a vertically scrolling version of Konami's classic *Scramble*. The idea of the game is pretty much identical as you guide a spaceship through a series of tight caverns trying not to smash into the sides or run out of fuel. The game gets increasingly challenging as the levels progress.



EASTERN FRONT 1941
■ ATARI ■ 1982

Eastern Front 1941 was, for the time, a groundbreaking strategy war game. The title was designed so that the computer would learn as the game went on, meaning that you would both start the game as beginners. The computer opponent would also continue to think throughout your own turn, giving it more time to plan its next move.



SIDEWINDER
■ FUTUREWARE ■ 1986

Sidewinder is a really interesting game that combines elements of *Gravitar*, *Scramble* and Elite's *Airwolf* computer game. You have to guide your helicopter through five perilous levels, take out the enemy installations and return to the surface. The original version of the game also included a very nice level editor that was left out of the later Zeppelin re-release.

planned called the 1600XL, 1650XLD and 1850XLD that added even more features including duel processor architecture. These were soon cancelled when James Morgan became CEO and wanted Atari to return to its videogame roots.

Unfortunately Atari suffered several delays getting these new XL systems out the door and this hit it hardest when it almost completely missed the critical 1983 Christmas season, with machines only arriving in small numbers just weeks before the big day. With the Commodore 64 available in huge numbers Jack Tramiel was able to win the price war and soon dominate the 8-bit computer market. This price-cutting left Jack Tramiel in a vulnerable position within Commodore as the move was unpopular with the rest of the board. This arguing led to him being ousted from his own company and looking for a way to get back at them.

When Warner decided to offload Atari's consumer division, after massive losses caused by the North American videogame crash, Jack Tramiel and his newly formed Tramel Technology were back in the game. After Jack acquired these assets and merged them into his new company – renaming the new company Atari Corporation – re-launching the A8 was one of the first things on his mind. Jack's new machines were announced in 1985 alongside the new 16-bit Atari ST computer and would feature a similar case design. They would be called the XE series (XL Expanded) and would initially come in two variations; the 64k 65XE and 128k 130XE. The cartridge port had been moved to the side and they featured a much lower cost design. Two other XE machines would follow – the 800XE was essentially a 65XE that was re-badged for the Eastern European market and the XE Games System (or XEGS), a console version of the machine designed to appeal more to hardcore gamers. Atari also planned, but never released, a portable version of the 65XE that included a built in 3.5" disk drive, 5" green screen and internal battery pack as well as another model that included the ▶



"For the next year I became obsessed with pushing the machine to its limits"

Archer MacLean

Classic games you can't get anywhere else



MIRAX FORCE

■ TYNESOFT ■ 1987

The Atari 8-bit missed out on a port of Hewson's superb *Uridium*, but it did receive several clones of which this one is arguably the best. According to the programmer Chris Murray it was programmed in just 11 days and the crisp speech samples included in game are in fact his own voice! Atari also released a *Uridium* clone of its own called *Thunderfox*.



PLASTRON

■ HARLEQUIN SOFTWARE ■ 1990

This was one of the last games released for the Atari 8-bit series but also one of the most impressive. The game plays a little bit like the classic *Moon Patrol* only with a 3D perspective added, and is particularly notable for its fantastic music and smooth high colour visuals. Sadly no other Harlequin games ever saw a release.



» Plug in an Atari joystick and prepare yourself for a world of great gaming.

▶ AMY sound synthesiser. The Atari 8-bit range was officially discontinued on 1 January 1992.

Throughout the course of its life the A8 range sold well on both sides of the Atlantic but never quite hit the heights that it should have. This was down to a combination of several factors, including the initial high price, production problems, internal upheaval at Atari itself and a lack of decent marketing. Software support tailed off quite early in the US due to the rampant piracy on the machine while in the United Kingdom and Europe it saw a late renaissance through the growing budget market. During the late Eighties the remaining 800XL stock and then the new 65XE were being heavily discounted through chains like Dixons and home catalogues. This led to a small spike in sales that saw the machine receive lots of new games on tape from leading budget publishers like Codemasters, Mastertronic, Players, Atlantis and Zeppelin. Among the lazy ports from other 8-bit systems were some true gems that sadly never made it to the other side of the Atlantic. Games like *Panther*, *Grand Prix Simulator* and *Draconus* continued to show what the machine could do and saw notable musicians David Whittaker and Rob Hubbard work their wonders with the POKEY chip.

For their time the Atari 8-bits were very powerful computers, it wasn't really until the Commodore 64 arrived some three years later that a similarly specced home computer was available to the masses. Many programmers cut their teeth on the A8 including legendary names such as Jeff Minter, Archer MacLean, Ed Fries and Chris Crawford. One of the key features that put the A8 above its competition was the sheer number of colours it had. Chuck Peavey programmed one of the system's best games in *Panther* and saw this as a real perk. "There are several things that set the Atari 8-bit computers apart. First and most obvious were the 128 colours. It was amazing they could get 120 colours on the screen at the same time. Sure, that's no big deal today, but back then it was difficult to get eight colours on any other machine." Programmer Bill Hogue also shared a similar view on this feature: "I liked it better than the Apple II and TRS-80 as far as graphics went," he explains. "The Atari had so many colours you could show at the same time. In *Miner 2049er* I tried to use every possible colour!" Bill goes on to talk about the Atari's famous POKEY chip, telling us, "The sound was also great – I loved the POKEY chip and the noise rumble it could make." Chuck just loved the music on *Panther*. "I thought David Whittaker did some great music, I listened to that song so many times!"



» Cartridges were an expensive alternative to the more common tape and disk-based releases.

Archer MacLean was impressed by the A8 in general. "I realised straight away that there must be some real clever hardware inside the Atari 800. It could not have been done with just software. But Atari remained tight-lipped about what was inside their machine. My lucky break was to obtain a bible written by Chris Crawford on how to access the hardware bits. Once I read it there was no turning back. For the next year or two I became obsessed with pushing the machine to its limits."

This became one of the key themes that came up when talking with programmers about the A8 range, its general flexibility and the ability to pull off hardware tricks. Chuck waxes lyrical when it comes to this. "The screen display mode was awesome, you could make the screen be anywhere in memory you wanted. This is the basis for so many video memory configurations today. Having that flexibility is very powerful." He goes on to explain: "For example, in *Dark Chambers*, I used two maps. While the player was watching one screen, I was redrawing the monsters and background on the second screen. At the next vertical blank interrupt, I moved the pointer to reference the second screen. At this point, I would begin redrawing the first screen before switching again." Not to be outdone, Archer adds an example of his own from *Dropzone*. "It was very colourful, ran at a constant 50Hz, had masses of lumps of graphics flying around everywhere, lots of explosions and stacks of tiny animated touches that I didn't expect anyone to notice. But it was a huge hit over here and deemed well ahead of its time."

So why should we remember the Atari 8-bit computers? We'll leave *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* creator Bill Hogue with the last word: "The Atari computers inspired a *lot* of kids to become software engineers. I can't tell you how many letters that I've gotten from people telling me that. Everybody has a favourite game from that system they fondly remember. I remember playing *Star Raiders* at the local computer store. Those were great times!"

AN INTERVIEW WITH ED FRIES

Ed Fries is best known as the former vice president of game publishing at Microsoft and had an important role in the acquisition of developers Bungie, Ensemble and Rare. He cut his teeth making games for the 8-bit Atari computers



What titles did you work on for the Atari 8-bit?
I worked freelance while going to high school and later college for a company called ROMOX. They saw a *Frogger* clone I wrote called *Froggie* and asked me to make changes to it so they could release it as *Princess And Frog*. After that I wrote two more games for them: *Anteater* and *Sea Chase*. My first game for the A8 was a *Space Wars* clone called *Space Combat* that I wrote before *Froggie* but sadly it was never published.

What did you think of the machine when you first encountered it?
I received it as a Christmas present and at first I was disappointed because I had used Apple IIs at school and was hoping for one of those, but once I played around with the machine a bit I realised how much better it was.

How do you think the Atari 8-bit stacked up against its rivals?
You could really tell it was built with games in mind. As a programmer you had hardware sprites, good sound and great graphics architecture too.

What were the good/bad points about the system?
On the good side, as I said above, the graphics and sound really were great for the time. On the bad side, the whole SIO bus thing was awkward and made for expensive peripherals of which there were not very many compared to the Apple II.

Do you have any memorable stories from your time with the machine?
When I moved away to college I brought my Atari 800 on the airplane but had to ship out a small TV to use with it so I didn't have that when I arrived. I had forgotten to bring an alarm clock and needed to be awake at a certain hour the next morning so I programmed the Atari to wake me up. It was a fun challenge to work 'blindfolded' without a screen and sure enough it started buzzing at the right time in the morning just as I planned!

What were your own favourite games for the machine?
MULE was my favourite, with *Star Raiders* a close second.

Why do you think the Atari 8-bit machines should be remembered?
It was released around the pinnacle of Atari's success and was really a wonderful machine to both work and play on.

SYSTEM JUMPERS

They started on Atari's machine, but moved to other systems

STAR RAIDERS II

■ ATARI ■ 1985

Originally starting life as a game based on *The Last Starfighter* movie it was later renamed as a sequel to Doug Neubauer's classic *Star Raiders*. Widely regarded as one of the best games on the system, Electric Dreams converted it to the Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC in 1987. However, the A8 version remains the best of the bunch.





NECROMANCER

■ SYNAPSE SOFTWARE ■ 1982

Necromancer is a very original and highly impressive game that came out quite early in the system's life. You play the part of a wizard with a magical ability to control trees and repel trolls. Different skills are required for the two very different parts of the game. The game later saw a release for the Commodore 64 and Atari 5200 console.





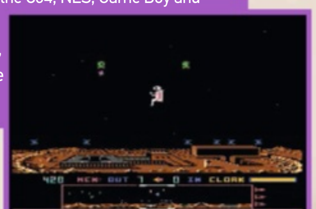




DROPZONE

■ US GOLD ■ 1984

One of the Atari 8-bit's most famous games, Archer MacLean's *Dropzone* was heavily based on the arcade game *Defender*. Despite being a clone of sorts, the game was very successful and so well regarded that it saw conversions to the C64, NES, Game Boy and Game Gear as well as updates for the SNES, PlayStation and Game Boy Advance.





SPELUNKER

■ BRØDERBUND ■ 1984

Originally inspired by Activision's classic *Pitfall!*, *Spelunker* is a cave exploring arcade adventure that was one of the first computer games to be translated into coin-op form. As well as Irem's arcade version we saw ports to the Commodore 64, MSX and NES too. The game was recently remade for the Nintendo Wii, 3DS and an HD remake for the PlayStation 3.

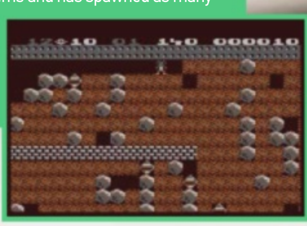




BOULDER DASH

■ FIRST STAR SOFTWARE ■ 1984

Without doubt one of the most cloned games of all time, *Boulder Dash* took Namco's classic *Dig Dug* and added huge scrolling levels and new strategical elements into the mix. It saw official ports to no less than 15 different systems and has spawned as many sequels. The game lives on to this day via modern updates for current-gen systems.







Special thanks to: Chuck Peavey, Archer MacLean, Bill Hogue and Ed Fries.



BIO

Tekken is a great example of how home conversions can build a legend. The game played second fiddle to *Virtua Fighter 2* in arcades, falling so far behind that director Katsuhiro Harada took to arcades in costume to promote the game himself. In the home market, the story was different. As the best fighting game on the most popular console, *Tekken* was able to find an audience of eager combatants and sold over a million copies, making stars of Heihachi, Nina, Yoshimitsu and the rest of the cast in the process.

CLASSIC MOMENTS

Tekken

» **PLATFORM:** ARCADE, PLAYSTATION » **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO » **RELEASED:** 1994

The moment where you finally get to play a brand new console has always been exciting. After months of hype, picking through every detail in previews and closely scrutinising every screenshot, the finished product is in your hands. The new possibilities enabled by the hardware become clear to you, and you begin to wonder how you ever managed without them.

When new PlayStation owners got to grips with *Tekken*, siblings, best friends and housemates across the world quickly came to understand that the main new feature they'd be experiencing was the instant replay. *Virtua Fighter*'s inclusion of the feature had made it a 3D fighting standard, but *Tekken*'s genius was to play it back in slow motion. It was always satisfying to beat an opponent, but the extended playback of the finishing blow gave victorious players an opportunity to take their gloating to new heights. With insult added to injury, furious players learned to quickly jab at the Start button to skip the pain – or else begin a rage-induced rematch.



MORE CLASSIC TEKKEN MOMENTS

Ringside seat



By using polygons, *Tekken* is able to animate its grappling techniques in much more detail than the 2D games that preceded it. All manner of holds, body slams and suplexes are on offer, looking particularly painful. The sense of impact is only enhanced by the dynamic camera, which rewards throws with a close-up shot that puts you right into the heat of the action.

Martial arts menagerie



Tekken's cast includes some rather bizarre characters, allowing for some weird matches. If you've ever needed to answer the question of who would win in a fight between a bear and a ninja, *Tekken* will let you sort that out. But for some reason, the image of a wrestler in a leopard mask performing an elbow drop on a massive robot always makes us laugh the most.

Explosive impact



Tekken does a lot to add a sense of spectacle to 3D fighting games, compared to the relatively reserved approach of the *Virtua Fighter* games. The satisfaction of landing a good punch is amplified massively by the colourful special effects added when it hits. We particularly love the electric crackle that accompanies many of Kazuya's iconic moves.

Cinematic closure



The PlayStation version of *Tekken* takes advantage of the CD storage medium by including exclusive FMV endings, which give closure to character stories. Easily the most dramatic was that of the protagonist, Kazuya Mishima. Having defeated the final boss, his father Heihachi, Kazuya picks up his unconscious body and drops it off a cliff before giving the camera an evil smile.

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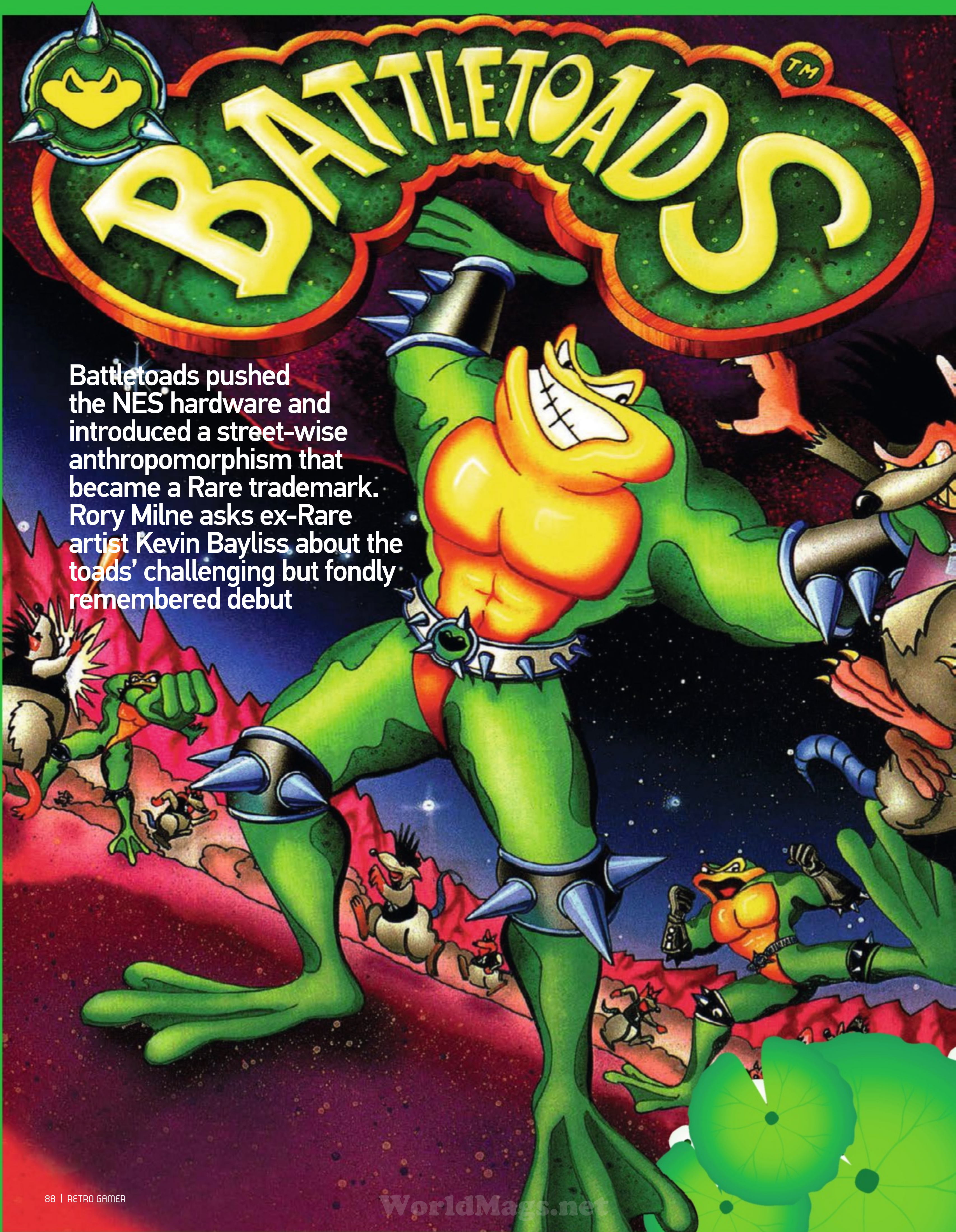
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Battletoads pushed the NES hardware and introduced a street-wise anthropomorphism that became a Rare trademark. Rory Milne asks ex-Rare artist Kevin Bayliss about the toads' challenging but fondly remembered debut

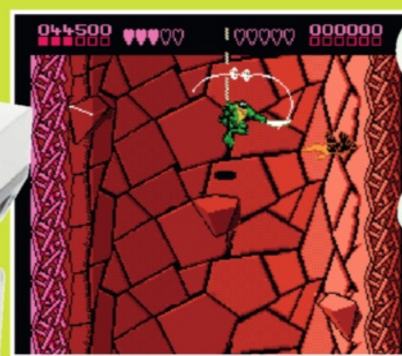




» [NES] The Battletoads' ship, the Vulture, lowers Rash down to planet Ragnarok as his mission begins.



» [NES] Battletoad Rash swings into action as he descends towards the Dark Queen's planet.



» [NES] It's "Bye, Bye, Blackbird!" as toad trumps raven in a sheer vertical drop.

Like *Donkey Kong Country*, *Battletoads* marked a pivotal point in Rare's journey. In the same way that *DKC* was Rare's last hurrah for the SNES – although not its last SNES title – *Battletoads* was Rare's swansong of sorts for the NES – although not its final NES effort. Both games were, though, the culmination of everything that Rare learned about the intimate workings of Nintendo's earliest consoles. And while Rare's later SNES and NES games innovated in terms of gameplay, they had little scope to improve technically on their iconic predecessors or, indeed, to squeeze more into their carts.

"Yeah, it was really *full*, if you know what I mean," agrees Kevin Bayliss, *Battletoads*' co-designer, "there wasn't a lot more we could cram in. We were constantly measuring the size of the code and graphics to ensure that it would fit on the cartridge that we had aimed it to be released on. *Battletoads* was really rammed in there!"

Of course, long before getting the game to fit its cartridge, concepts and characters would have to be developed, which was an aspect of *Battletoads*' design that would be very much influenced by the family-friendly guidelines that Rare worked to at the time. "Sideways scrolling arcade-style games were very popular around the late Eighties and early Nineties," Kevin remembers, "and as Rare had previous experience with that genre with some of the Ultimate titles, we decided to try one for NES. I was a huge *Double Dragon* fan at the time, and when Tim Stamper had okayed the idea of putting together a beat-'em-up style game he asked me to come up with some characters for it. Rare wasn't really known for making violent games, and Nintendo had a policy for limiting violence, ensuring that certain things were portrayed in a certain way. So we took the more fun-styled cartoon approach, rather than the more graphic and serious look of some of the other popular beat-'em-up games of the time. Enter the Battletoads!"

With a genre and direction chosen, Kevin got on with the task of developing the characters that would inhabit the *Battletoads* world ready for Tim to digitise and pass on to the game's coder Mark Betteridge, as Kevin explains. "I was heavily involved in creating the character designs, based on ideas that one of our writers, Guy Miller, was putting together working alongside Tim. I think apart from one or two, the designs of the characters were all drawn by me. I was mainly responsible for concept artwork and a little in-game artwork. I gave Tim sketches each day, and he'd then squeeze my designs into sprites. At that time, we were still tracing sketches on grids, and boxing sprites into as few characters as possible. You can recognise Tim's style when you look at how the toads, enemies and props compare to the Ultimate games. He was very clever at making graphics fit within a certain memory capacity due to his experience with Ultimate; there was an art to it I guess. We thought it would be fun to enlarge the fists upon impact when players hit their opponents. This really seemed to work on the tiny sprite characters, and so we expanded upon that by enhancing their limbs with power-ups, which gave the game a unique look, and it of course also became one of the main features of the characters themselves. Backgrounds were also heavily put together by Tim, as he was far more experienced in putting that kind of stuff together. He worked very closely with Mark Betteridge – the software genius behind a lot of Rare's earlier titles – while I churned out concept work, logos and front-end story graphics."

Having established a production line for *Battletoads*' visual components, the small team could start developing the game's ▶



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **DEVELOPER:** RARE
» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS
» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP / PLATFORMER

TOAD PROFILES



NAME: Rash
STYLE:
Too cool for school
■ A flamboyant extrovert, Rash has fast fighting moves to match his fast mouth. He may be the smallest of the toads, but that helps to make him the most agile.



NAME: Zitz
STYLE:
Brains over brawn
■ Leader of the Battletoads, Zitz is a tactical genius. He isn't as fast as Rash or as tough as Pimple, but he's good with gadgets – think James Bond with warts.



NAME: Pimple
STYLE:
Bull in a china shop
■ He's not the brightest, but Pimple's brute force comes in handy when the toads go into battle. Plus, he's dating a Princess, so he must be doing something right.



BATTLETOADS HISTORY

A quick overview of the series. How many have you played?

BATTLETOADS
NES 1991

■ It all began on the NES, of course, but the brawling, platforming and multi-genre stages of the Battletoads' first demanding outing were ported to various other consoles as well as the Amiga.





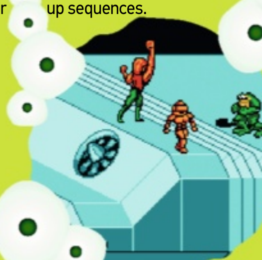
BATTLETOADS
GAME BOY 1991

■ Although released just after the NES original, Game Boy *Battletoads* was pretty much a completely different game. A few NES stages survived in adapted form, but the title essentially went its own way.

BATTLETOADS & DOUBLE DRAGON: THE ULTIMATE TEAM GAME BOY 1993

■ The Battletoads teamed up with the characters that inspired their creation for this sequel, and while it spanned several genres – much as its predecessor had done – the follow-up offered a few more sustained beat-'em-up sequences.





BATTLETOADS IN BATTLEMANIACS
SNES 1993

■ Although an original game, *Battlemaniacs* was heavily inspired by aspects of the first *Battletoads* title. Its visuals, plot and bosses were new, however, and its gameplay was reworked to show off the Super Nintendo hardware.

BATTLETOADS IN RAGNAROK'S WORLD GAME BOY 1993

■ Confusingly, this impressive system exclusive delivered exactly what might have been expected of Game Boy *Battletoads* – a stripped down version of the NES original with graphical concessions and fewer levels and bosses.

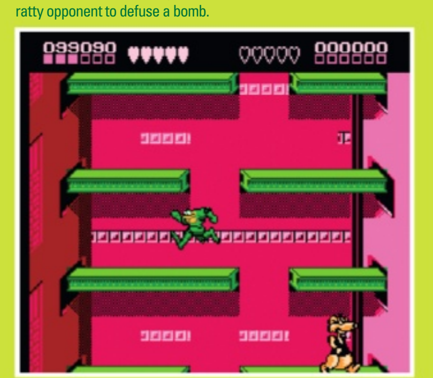




BATTLETOADS
ARCADE 1994

■ *Battletoads* undeservedly flopped at the arcades, despite being a high-quality scrolling fighter that refined the franchise's formula. The coin-op is predictably the best-looking *Battletoads* title released and favours brawling over other genres.

» [NES] An actual rat race, as Rash races a ratty opponent to defuse a bomb.





» [NES] This bruiser is called Robo-Manus – the bigger they come, the harder they fall, though.

design and storyline. "We all worked together on that team on a day-to-day basis," Kevin recalls, "but when it came to the game design and concepts for levels, that was really Tim and Mark. The game design was the first thing that was tried and tested. Story came afterwards. But once we had the first few levels rolling along and playing nicely, we continued to expand upon the story too. This story then gave us other ideas to work into the game, so we were soon developing the story and the game simultaneously."

The structure the team had put in place allowed the *Battletoads* project to quickly gain momentum, and a game-defining decision was soon made on the title's difficulty. "Mark had developed some editors for creating levels, and I think that Tim worked with him on putting those together," notes Kevin, "I remember that a lot of work went into making it seriously hard and precise. Some of it was crazy hard but that's the way it was intended to be; extremely challenging. I would often hear Mark scream when he was testing his own software if he failed to get past his own levels, but I don't think he made it *too* hard. I guess we just wanted value for money, and for the game to last. We'd always try to vary the levels so that you got a break from one particular style or genre within the game. It made it more refreshing to play over periods of time and a lot more challenging in general. The story would often help to play a part in creating those subgenres and added to the variation. I remember watching Tim draw all of the sections of the Dark Queen's tower, which Mark cleverly animated to achieve the 3D effect. It worked really well, and I learned a lot of tricks from Tim by watching him create those kinds of effects. I thought it looked amazing when I saw it working."



As *Battletoads*' visuals, design and gameplay evolved, another equally important aspect of the game was addressed – one that required an additional team member, as Kevin recollects. "My friend Dave Wise would come up with new music for each level – as far as I remember, that was pretty much the way it went for most games. The levels didn't really come to life until we had music and effects. I remember always looking forward to Dave appearing with a new disc that held the music to the next level. Once that was incorporated we'd sometimes switch the odd level music around to a different level, because sometimes tunes felt *right* on other levels. But usually, Dave would go away after looking at a level's graphics and a brief demo of the gameplay, and then he'd write a piece for the level. A lot of the sound effects were created by Mark – using some software he created to generate sounds."

Serious hours were being put in to *Battletoads* and the team's collective efforts were reaching fruition, and so work was started on the title's box art, but thought was also being given to documenting the game's visuals for future reference and to help with the marketing of the game. "I designed the box artwork, but Tim airbrushed and produced it." Kevin reveals, "It was the second design. I did one with the three toads on the front up-close, but it went off to focus groups and it didn't grab the kids' attention, so we did a redesign. I inked up a picture, and as Tim was so good



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1994

GOLDENEYE 007
SYSTEM: N64
YEAR: 1997

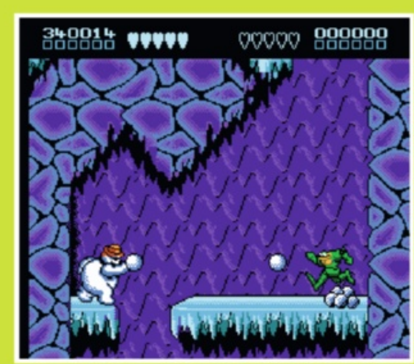
BANJO-KAZOOIE
SYSTEM: N64
YEAR: 1998



» [NES] Yes, that spaceship – the Dark Queen's Gargantua – is eating the toads' ride!

with the airbrush he did a fantastic job of the one we ended up with. We also made a style guide containing all of the characters within the game, we wanted as much of the concept illustrated on paper as possible. The style guides were used for reference when working with Nintendo. Putting them together also allowed us to present visually to the companies that became involved in marketing. I was busy working on the style guide and some of the other graphics for the game, but I wouldn't say that I spent anywhere near as many hours working on the game as Mark did. As usual, he practically lived at Rare when he worked on the game and got really into the thick of it."

Of course, before marketing *Battletoads*, the task of in-house testing the finished product remained, with the general feeling at Rare being that they had produced a title that was tough but fair. "I think Mark always wanted it to be difficult," Kevin admits, "It was never impossible, but always just required practice and of course some skill. The NES controllers were bulletproof little pads that were actually really responsive and could take some serious shit, but the game was tested on many controllers to make sure it was possible to play *right*, and it was, but you had to put in the practice. As a fighting game enthusiast I preferred the brawling levels. I could never complete it, but then there's nothing worse than a game that is too easy!"



» [NES] A spirited game of snowballs? Nope, these icy spheres are deadly, so duck, toad!

On its release, the idea that *Battletoads* might be too easy was either skilfully concealed in the glowing reviews that the game received or, far more likely, was simply not considered. Just as importantly, the impressive sales that the title enjoyed confirmed that NES gamers' appreciation for *Battletoads* matched the fevered enthusiasm shown by the videogames press. Further games in the series were now a formality, but *Battletoads* would also have a second less obvious legacy. "*Battletoads* became a template in some way," Kevin reasons, "perhaps *Battletoads*, when you think about it, was a changing point for Rare, and a lot of the game's elements echo throughout many of the company's later titles. Eventually it became kind of a trademark I guess, and future Rare games were often varied in the same kind of way as *Battletoads*."

Battletoads may be far from a template for Rare's current output, but like many gamers, Kevin feels that the seminal scrolling brawler stands up against anything that Rare or anyone else was producing at the time. "Most of the games we produced were top quality," Kevin beams, "some titles were stronger than others, but we learned as the company grew about what people wanted in a game. We always, always tried to make sure they were just fun to play, and that they would give a challenge to anyone who picked them up. When I see *Battletoads*, I see a lot of game rammed into that NES cart, and compared to a lot of the other games that were out at the time it offered a lot more. It looked great, sounded and played fantastic and it set the path for more *Battletoads* games, which proved its success. It's definitely one I'm proud of being a part of."

Many thanks to Kevin Bayliss for making this article possible.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGHTERS

Other animals with distinctly un-animal-like behaviour

MIYAMOTO USAGI



SPECIES: Rabbit
MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:
Samurai Warrior: The Battles Of Usagi Yojimbo

■ The creation of writer/artist Stan Sakai, Miyamoto Usagi appears in Dark Horse Comics' *Usagi Yojimbo* – which translates as "rabbit bodyguard". Usagi is a ronin who wanders ancient Japan on a warrior's pilgrimage. Beam Software skilfully adapted Usagi for the C64 in *Samurai Warrior* – an ambitious action-adventure.

LEONARDO



SPECIES: Turtle
MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Turtles In Time

■ Rare likely wouldn't have been too upset by the similarity between Kevin Bayliss's *Battletoads* designs and the hugely successful *Ninja Turtles*. Leonardo is the de-facto leader of the Turtles and was considered the most rounded fighter in their Nineties videogames, the best of which was probably Konami's *Turtles In Time*.

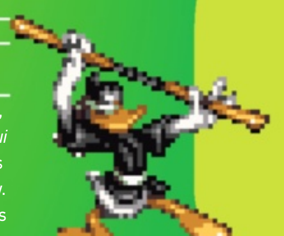
PRINCE LEON



SPECIES: Lion
MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:
Brutal: Above The Claw

■ Based on his 'Powerchord' special attack, Prince Leon of Kenya was something of an aspiring rock star. He featured in GameTek's anthropomorphic versus fighter series *Brutal*. The Sega 32X's *Above The Claw* was the most polished entry in the franchise, but the other *Brutal* games all featured pretty similar gameplay.

COLD SHADOW



SPECIES: Duck
MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:
Maui Mallard In Cold Shadow

■ Donald Duck used to moonlight as a detective/ninja. No, seriously, there was even a combat platformer called *Maui Mallard In Cold Shadow* where Maui Mallard was Donald's hapless detective cover for a ninja persona – Cold Shadow. 16-bit Disney titles typically impressed, and Cold Shadow's outing fit that trend.

PSYCHO FOX



SPECIES: Fox
MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:
Psycho Fox

■ He's often likened to Mario, apparently because his one game was on Sega's answer to the NES – the Master System – and because said outing was a colourful platformer. Psycho Fox's most un-Nintendo-like move was taking out opponents by punching them in the face! Well, he was called *Psycho* Fox.



In the chair with...

HOWELL IVY

From the black and white carnage of Death Race to the majesty of OutRun 2, Howell Ivy helped drive the arcade business forward for over three decades. Paul Drury hears about his wild ride

LEAVING BEHIND A CAREER IN THE MILITARY, HOWELL ENTERED THE EMERGING WORLD OF COIN-OP VIDEOGAMES IN THE EARLY SEVENTIES. HIS FIRST GAME, 1974'S CLEAN SWEEP, INVOLVED A BOUNCING BALL, A BAT AND A SCREEN OF DOTS TO CLEAR – ATARI'S BREAKOUT CLEARLY OWES IT A DEBT. AFTER PRODUCING NUMEROUS OTHER TITLES FOR RAMTEK, HE LEFT TO JOINTLY FOUND EXIDY ('EXCELLENCE IN DYNAMICS') AND OVER THE NEXT DECADE HE HELPED THE COMPANY BECOME A MAJOR PLAYER IN THE ARCADE BUSINESS, WITH SUCH HITS AS CIRCUS, CROSSBOW AND DEATH RACE, THE FIRST 'VIDEOGAME NASTY'. HE JOINED SEGA OF AMERICA IN 1986 AND STAYED THERE UNTIL 2004, OVERSEEING THE PRODUCTION OF THEIR COIN-OP MACHINES. "I'VE BEEN VERY FORTUNATE," HOWELL TOLD US WITH A CHUCKLE. "I HAVEN'T WORKED A DAY IN MY LIFE. I GET UP AND I HAVE FUN!"



» A very dapper Howell in his military days before leaving the Air Force to fly high in the emerging world of videogames.

We understand you joined the military after leaving school. How on earth did you end up making some of the earliest arcade videogames?
[Laughs] I spent seven and a half years in the military after I got out of tech school and around 1972, I was in Sunnyvale, California, at the satellite test facility there. On base there was the arcade game *Computer Space*. I thought, 'hey, that looks like fun… I could do that!' So I went back to the two-bedroom apartment I shared with my wife and started designing a game.

You make it sound easy but, back then, creating a videogame was a case of soldering together circuit boards, right?
Oh yeah, it was all done using hard logic. AND gates, OR gates, counters… microprocessors didn't come in until much later. In the military, I had worked with CCTV systems and my speciality in the Air Force was telemetry systems. I had a really good understanding of how to move information from one place to another, using both analogue and digital technologies, and I was familiar with how TV screens worked so it was obvious to me how to put an image on the screen and move it around.

Did you manage to get a game working, then?
Yes. It was very similar to *Pong* but you could move the paddle along the X as well as the Y axis. There was a company in Sunnyvale called Ramtek, so I took my game round to show them and they paid me $2,000 for it! They never released it but they offered me a job.

Did they give you a specific game concept to work on?
They basically left it up to me. I began designing *Clean Sweep* while I was still in the military, working on the game at night. It took me three months and that was my first commercial release. I started working for them full-time after that.

What did your wife make of you going from a career in the military to this new-fangled world of videogames?
She wasn't into technology… it was a pay cheque!

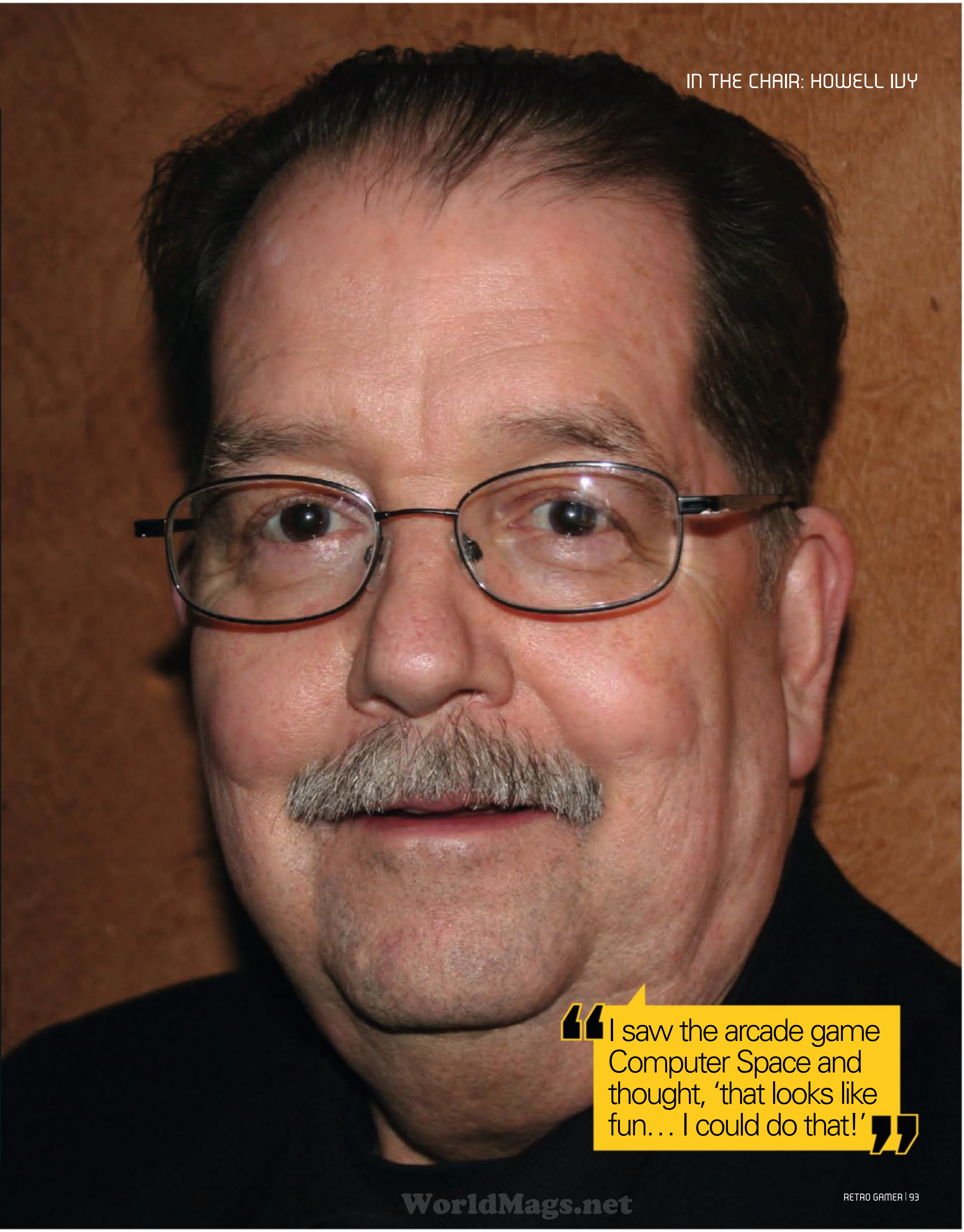
You must have felt a real sense of pride seeing *Clean Sweep* in your local arcade.
I had that sense of pride and accomplishment before that, when I saw a hundred units on the production line all running my game at the same time. I was 24 years old and to have something I'd created from my own imagination, going from nothing to design, manufacturing and being shipped to customers, well, that's a feeling that everyone should experience at least once in their lifetime.

SELECTED TIMELINE

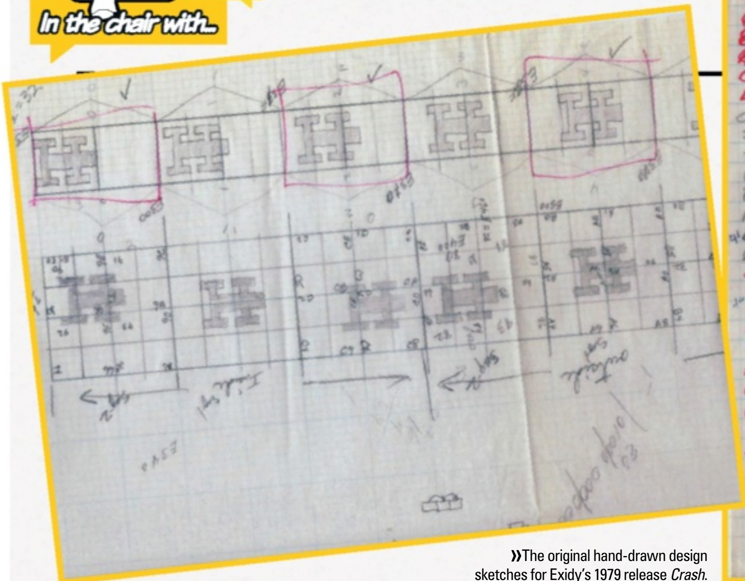
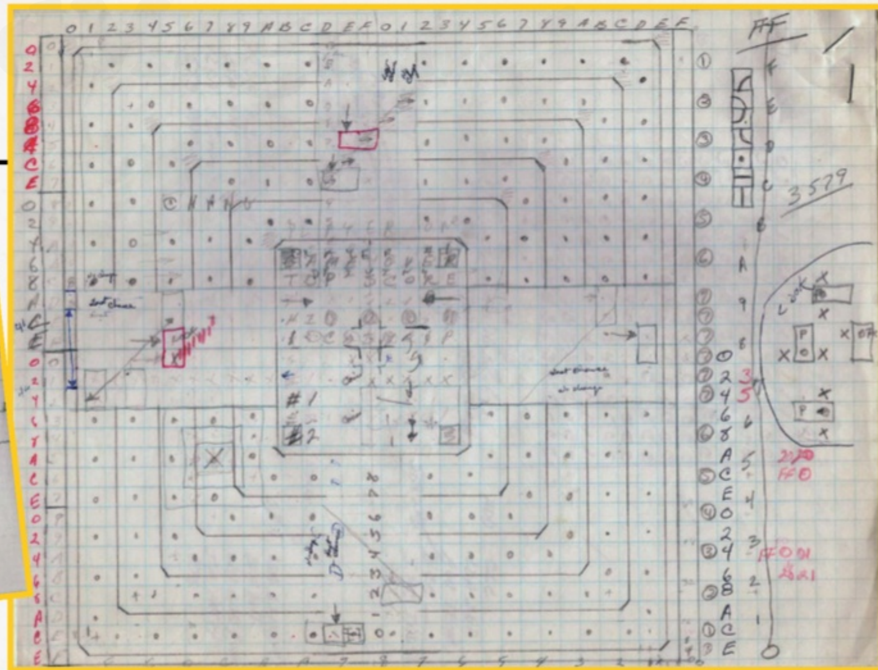
- **CLEAN SWEEP** [ARCADE] 1974
- **TRIVIA** [ARCADE] 1975
- **DESTRUCTION DERBY** [ARCADE] 1975
- **BARRICADE** [ARCADE] 1976
- **DEATH RACE** [ARCADE] 1976
- **CAR POLO** [ARCADE] 1977
- **CIRCUS** [ARCADE]1977
- **ROBOT BOWL** [ARCADE] 1978
- **STAR FIRE** [ARCADE] 1978
- **EXIDY SORCERER** [HOME COMPUTER] 1978
- **CRASH** [ARCADE] 1979
- **VENTURE** [ARCADE]1980
- **MOUSE TRAP** [ARCADE] 1981
- **VICTORY** [ARCADE]1982
- **CROSSBOW** [ARCADE] 1983
- **CHEYENNE** [ARCADE]1984
- **CHILLER** [ARCADE] 1986
- **ENDURO RACER** [ARCADE] 1986
- **VIRTUA FIGHTER** [ARCADE] 1993
- **DAYTONA USA** [ARCADE]1994

What other arcade games did you create on behalf of Ramtek?
I designed everything Ramtek released after *Clean Sweep* onward. I had a little table, mounds of data books and I'd be looking at what parts I'd need to put together a circuit to carry out a certain function. I did *Wipe Out*, *Deluxe Baseball*, which Ramtek licensed to Midway, *Blocker*… games mainly based around competitive sports themes.

One unusual title you did for Ramtek was *Trivia*, a very early quiz game.
That used 8-track tapes to store the questions. It was still done in hard logic but I designed an interface for the PDP-11 computer so we could use that to write data files to the audiotape for the questions. When you put a quarter in, the tape started running, so



"I saw the arcade game Computer Space and thought, 'that looks like fun… I could do that!'"

The original hand-drawn design sketches for Exidy's 1979 release *Crash*.



[Arcade] *Star Fire* may have been inspired by the *Star Wars* film but it introduced cockpit cabinets and high score initials to the arcade.

however long it took you to answer a question would determine what question it would take off the tape next. That made it random! The hardest thing to do was come up with thousands of questions. We were paying employees a dollar a question to come up with them!

You left Ramtek to help found Exidy. Was setting up on your own a big risk?
There were only three of us to begin with. I did all the hardware and software engineering, Pete Kauffman was more on the sales and marketing side and Bob Newsome, who sadly passed away in the late Seventies, was the financial guy. We were totally self-financed – we put our money in and built our first game and then built another and another and started employing more and more people.

An early success for Exidy was 1975's *Destruction Derby*, a two-player competitive driving game with some impressive head-on collisions to boot.
We licensed that game to Chicago Coin [who released it as *Demolition Derby*] and we were shipping boards to them but they were behind on paying us. So I thought, 'how can I change *Destruction Derby* to make it different so we have another game to put out there?' It's very hard to change the gameplay when a game is done in hard logic but to just change the images, that's not so hard. It was a very early use of PROMs – Programmable Read Only Memory – and I realised I could change the cars to people! When they get run over, well, I can't have a dead body, but how about just a cross? That's how *Death Race* was born.

The game became infamous as the first 'videogame nasty'. Didn't you have any inkling that a game involving running over and killing people would cause controversy?
Absolutely none! I didn't have any second thoughts.

When did you realise *Death Race* had caused a stir?
A newspaper in Seattle or someplace published an article about this game that let you run over people. The associated newswire picked it up and it escalated from there. I was as surprised as anyone. We had no intention of creating a controversial product. But I wouldn't have done anything different anyway.

The game was vilified in numerous newspapers and television reports and even featured on hard-hitting news programme *60 Minutes*. We bet that can't have hurt sales…
We couldn't have bought that much publicity for the product [laughs]. It was banned in some areas and they had to remove it but overall it turned out to be a big plus. It definitely helped Exidy get off the ground, though I'm not saying we wouldn't have gotten off the ground anyway.

> "We had no intention of creating a controversial product with Death Race, but I wouldn't have done anything different anyway!"

Didn't you receive death threats over the game?
Yeah, we'd had some really threatening letters in the mail. For about a month we had to hire private security guards at the company. We thought we better take precautions…

We like the press release Exidy put out at the time, claiming you weren't actually killing anyone in *Death Race* because those were 'gremlins' the player was running over, not real people. Did you really expect anyone to buy that?
[Laughs heartily] We made that spin up on the spot! After all the controversy, we said, 'look, we're getting some negative press here so hey, let's pretend they're ghosts or gremlins. That'd work!'

Do you ever hear the debate about violence in videogames and think, I started that?
I didn't start it but maybe I was the catalyst. You know, the person that really started it was the reporter in Seattle who wrote the original *Death Race* article. Which I was perfectly fine with! And if you compare *Death Race* with violence in games today, there's no comparison.

In 1977, the year after Exidy released *Death Race*, you had another big hit with *Circus*. You went from the ultra-violent to the super cute! Were you drawing on childhood memories of trips to the Big Top?
I wish I could say yes but it was just about coming up with another way to use the same hardware. You tried to recycle the hardware as much as you could so you didn't have to start from zero each time.

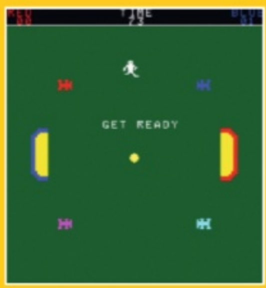
We love the animation of the flailing limbs of those hapless clowns. It really gave the game a sense of character.
You always want to be able to do something a bit more exciting than you did last time, to give your game a bit more personality and to get the player personally involved. And you wanted to attract the female player.

Was getting girls playing arcade games an explicit goal, then?
Oh yes. Back then, there was the realisation that most people playing videogames were the more aggressive, competitive types, so we thought, 'let's try to do something females would like to widen our audience'.

That's very forward thinking, Howell. We also like how Exidy experimented with cabinet design, such as 1977's *Robot Bowl*.

FIVE TO PLAY

Howell has experimented with all sorts of genres. Here are some of his best games



CAR POLO

■ Exidy's first arcade game to use a microprocessor was also an interesting link to Howell's past, drawing on both the *Pong*-inspired sports games he made for Ramtek and the aggressive driving mechanic of *Destruction Derby*. In this combination of the sport of kings and banger racing, players must drive the ball into their opponent's goal, assisted (or, more commonly, hindered) by an erratic, computer-controlled teammate. It's an interesting mash-up and the way your vehicle nudges the ball makes us think of a proto-*Sensible Soccer*, but the main reason we're including this Seventies oddity is because it's Howell's favourite from his coding days. "I really liked the way it played and how it was presented as this four-player game," he smiles. "It didn't do well but that wasn't unusual!"



VENTURE

■ The early Eighties was something of a golden era for Exidy, and this arcade adventure is testament to it pushing the coin-op envelope. As the rotund Winky, you must battle through four levels of a castle, with each containing a quartet of rooms teeming with monsters. Using your trusty bow and arrow, you must dispatch demons, skeletons, trolls and all manner of evil creatures to snatch treasures and escape before the indestructible hall monsters enter your domain. The array of enemies and sneaky traps keeps things interesting and the way that slain beasts slowly decay is rather unsettling. It's technically impressive too, especially the eye-catching 'zoom' affect as you enter a new room. The ColecoVision boasts a fine home conversion of this underrated game.



MOUSE TRAP

■ At first glance, this just seems to be a *Pac-Man* clone with a *Tom And Jerry* makeover. You're a grinning mouse, the pills have become wedges of cheese, the ghosts are now hungry cats and the power pellets are bones that morph you temporarily into canine form. Released the year after Namco's seminal maze game, *Mouse Trap* adds a number of intriguing features to the genre, though. You can open and close gates by tapping the appropriate coloured button, allowing tactical entrapment of your pursuers and the bones can be saved up until you're in a tight spot, when hitting the 'doggie' button will allow you to turn the tables on your feline foes. Add to this the deadly hawk, teleporters and constantly respawning bonuses and you have an entertaining and tough little title.



CHILLER

■ *Death Race* may have caused the first moral panic about the dangers of violent videogames but, playing it today, mowing down little stick men and steering round tiny crosses, it's hard to see what all the fuss was really about. *Chiller*, on the other hand, still has the power to shock. Released exactly a decade after Exidy first courted controversy, this lightgun shooter is gloriously gory, unashamedly revelling in decapitation, severed limbs and crows pecking out human hearts. The opening scene, set in a torture chamber, features some horrific skull crushing and the 'Rack Room' has helpless victims, dressed only in leather-fetish wear, being literally ripped in half. You'll play it and still not quite believe it's actually happening. We say, BAN THIS SICK FILTH NOW!



VIRTUA FIGHTER

■ Howell spent 18 years at Sega and oversaw the manufacture of some of the company's finest arcade games. *Sega Rally*, *Daytona USA*, *Virtua Tennis*, *Golden Axe*, *Streets Of Rage*, *Monkey Ball* and countless others could have made this list but we've plumped for the pioneering polygons of *Virtua Fighter*. These beautifully balanced brawlers helped usher in a new era of arcade beat-'em-ups and the strategic nature of scraps, particularly the 'ring out' rule, meant button-mashers would have to seriously rethink their approach. There's also a sense of 'realism' to the combat here, before spectacular, screen-filling special moves became all the rage, and who doesn't love the marvellous array of hairstyles on show? Pai's pigtails and Jeffry's natty dreads are our favourites.

We wanted to expand our market and get our games into more places like cocktail lounges and waiting rooms, not just arcades. For *Robot Bowl*, we even purchased about a thousand cabinets from another game that had a big hole in the front. We put the game in those cabinets and said it was like the 'ball return' you had in a bowling alley!

Did you see Exidy as challenging Atari for top spot as arcade innovators?
Oh, we were competitors from the early days, at Ramtek and then Exidy. Atari was only about a quarter mile away from our factory but we didn't see them on a daily basis, only really at shows. It was a friendly rivalry. You know that every company is not going to have a hit game every time. You're trying to do your best and have the right product at the right time.

Exidy were certainly doing well throughout the Seventies. Was it all fast cars and hot tubs, like it was at Atari?
[Laughs] No, it was all work! We never really got into that side of the industry. Taking a product from concept to production in six months takes a bit of effort!

In 1978, Exidy diversified and produced its own computer, the Sorcerer. What prompted your move into the home computer market?
Around that time, the transition to microprocessors happened. Exidy's first game to use one was *Car Polo* and the ones that followed used more and more microprocessors. Paul Terrell had the Byte shops in the Bay Area which sold computers and he came to us with an idea. He said, 'you're using microprocessors in your games already, let's make a home computer!' We thought, 'well, we have all this knowledge and experience… let's do it!'

What was your role in the project?
I was the engineer and creator of the Sorcerer. It used a Z80 processor and the graphics architecture was straight from a videogame, with a little higher resolution. We did some in-house software and also licensed some from Microsoft.

That's an early and very prescient relationship with Microsoft! Did you meet Bill Gates?
I flew down to Arizona and negotiated with him directly so the Sorcerer would use Microsoft BASIC. I met him at his office when he only had four or five people working for him. I just wish I'd put down a ▶



© Howell Ivy

In the chair with...

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

We gave Howell his own Trivia quiz using your questions, but without the need for an 8-Track cartridge…

MERMAN: Were there any projects that you scrapped or abandoned?

About 30 per cent! With game design, you go from conception, when you come up with ten ideas. Five get to the stage of you investigating them and thinking about them seriously, then three of them go to prototype and one goes into production!

THE LAIRD: My kid brother was terrified of the hall monsters in *Venture*. Was scaring players something you were trying to achieve?

Not really scaring them but giving them a challenge. You put things in the game that present obstacles and players need to learn to avoid them but then again, you do want to get them as deeply involved in the game as you can.

PARANOID MARVIN: *Venture* and *Berzerk* were very similar games, both released in 1980. What do you think made *Berzerk* more popular when *Venture* was the better game?

[Laughs] It's called marketing! You have two hurdles to get over. The first is the distributor, who's handling the product in the marketplace because they have lots of other products they're trying to move at the same time. The second is the cashbox, which is the easiest market to work out – you weigh it and whichever game has the heaviest, you buy!

MAYHEM: How do you feel about *Circus* being so widely copied by other companies?

It's flattering, I guess. Even if we'd had a patent, that's like a locked gate in an open field! There's so many ways you can do the same thing and not infringe on someone's patent. *Circus* was moving into a different genre and everyone would've gotten there, but it pointed the way to a different style. I prefer to be a little bit adventurous and fail, than to make 'me too' products.



» Howell (second from right) poses proudly with *Deluxe Baseball* (1976) during his Ramtek days.

$100 bill on his desk and said, 'Bill, remember me with this. Thank you.' [Laughs]

Was the Sorcerer aimed at the home or the small business market?
We were shooting for the business side. We had no intention of it being a games computer because the idea of home computer games hadn't really gelled by that time. We had a word processor and quite a few applications… I even made ROM packs from 8-Track tapes with the insides taken out that you could plug in to the side of the machine like a cartridge!



» Howell was instrumental in creating the Exidy Sorcerer home computer. We wonder how much better it might have sold if it had run *Death Race*…

© Marcin Wichary

The Sorcerer launched in April 1978 and the response was initially encouraging, especially in Europe.
Yes, it did particularly well in the Netherlands and also in Australia. We were shipping a thousand a month at the start. The only real competitor we had was Apple but we made several mistakes. We had opportunities to expand but you have to remember, we were totally self-financed. We had no VC or big investors. Keeping the business ourselves came back to bite us when we wanted to expand!

It must have been very disappointing when the machine didn't take off.
For its time, it was definitely advanced. It had a lot of the architecture and graphical capability of an arcade machine built in without customers knowing it! It had high resolution graphics… but only in black and white. The resolution of the Sorcerer was much higher than the TVs of the time, so we traded off having pretty pictures on it for looking good for the business side of the market. That's the market we were shooting for. It wasn't meant to be a games machine!



» [Arcade] The first game Howell worked on after joining Sega in 1986 was the 'wheelie good' *Enduro Racer*.

In retrospect, do you wish that you had made games for it?
[sighs] We had two sides to the business and I was making products for both sides. I had a small team on the hardware and software side for the Sorcerer and we were making a disk drive and things like that but Exidy was still mainly focussed on the arcade business.

As the Eighties dawned, Exidy was certainly making some interesting arcade games. *Venture* (1980) was a fine start to the new decade.
That was begun by another guy at Exidy and was kind of inspired by playing *Dungeons & Dragons*. We couldn't call it 'Adventure' so we thought, hey, *Venture*! We needed a character you could move in all directions so we came up with this little round guy, Winky! The hardware was pretty extensive. It was like the next generation and had enough memory to give that appearance of zooming in on a room when you enter it.

***Mouse Trap*, released the following year, was another of our favourites, though it does remind us of *Ladybug* by Universal which came out around the same time.**
Of course, they were like the next generation of *Pac-Man* – the same game elements, with the concept of a maze and a chase. It's amazing through the years how many times independent companies, not collaborating, come out with the same kind of product! There'd be like a driving game year and a maze game year. It's like a parallel effort.

Probably your most successful title of the early Eighties was *Crossbow*. Was this the first time you'd dabbled in lightgun games?
I designed the optical system for *Crossbow* and I think it was the first arcade gun game to use

anything like that. I think I invented that. It goes back to my background of knowing how a television works. The way the RT scans the lines, the light is going on and off at different times. I had to read quite a few optical lens manuals to come up with the right lensing for the sensor and the right speed for the detector. It took me a couple of months to work it out but once it was perfected, it was completely independent and self-calibrating.

The game really stood out from the crowd in the arcades, with the big wooden crossbow on the front of the cabinet and the impressive sound and digitised speech.
What I always like to do is something better. Difference sells – you can't just be a 'me too' designer. You have to go out on that limb… and hope you didn't cut off too many limbs! Being one of the owners of the company and the chief engineer I could basically do whatever I wanted to. Putting things like speech or music into a game, it was like, why not? It adds to it!

As we're speaking to you from Nottingham, can we confirm that Robin Hood, our most famous son, was an inspiration?
[Laughs] Yes, you can credit Nottingham for having an influence on that game!



» [Arcade] Exidy created a series of arcade lightgun games, such as the Wild West-themed *Cheyenne*.

You followed *Crossbow* with a string of lightgun games, such as *Cheyenne* (1984), *Combat* (1985) and *Chiller* (1986). Did you feel Exidy had found a lucrative niche in the market?
They were very successful for us. We had a lot of people copying lightgun games later on but that created another genre – shooting games.

> "I met Bill Gates when he only had four or five people working for Microsoft. I wish I'd put a $100 bill on his desk and said, 'Bill, remember me with this!'"

***Chiller* in particular is amazingly gory. Did you have any qualms about setting a game in a torture chamber?**
None at all! It's a horror game. It was taking some ideas from *Death Race* – mmm, that had gore and was controversial… maybe we can capitalise on that again! It's in the back of your mind that it might increase sales.

Did anyone have to dress up in those leather outfits that the poor victims wear in the game to help when creating the graphics?
No, they were all done from imagination!

You left Exidy shortly after *Chiller* was released. Was that a big wrench for you?
Exidy had been badly affected by the videogame crash of 1983. The whole industry changed. The sales, distribution and marketing of games became very difficult and we went through some really hard times. Around 1984, we filed for bankruptcy. For the next few years, I didn't take a dime. Everything we made went to pay the employees. I was very depleted. I pulled Exidy out of bankruptcy and paid off all the creditors during those years and then in 1986 I sold my interest in it. I needed a pay cheque and Sega made me an offer I really couldn't refuse!

What was your role at Sega of America?
Sega was re-entering the United States. They had a company in Southern California which Bally Midway had bought in the early Eighties, mainly for their laserdisc games, and part of the agreement was that Sega wouldn't compete in the American marketplace for five years. By the mid-Eighties, they were allowed to come back and we did some sub-contracting for them at Exidy for about a year, building some of their arcade games in our factory. In 1986, Dave Rosen and Hayao Nakayama approached me and asked me to join Sega. I sold my stake in Exidy and started doing manufacturing for them, handling Sega products for South America and Europe and shipping products worldwide including back to Japan. I was a vice president of Sega USA!

Did you finally get the fast car?
[Laughs] I did get a Mercedes, yeah!

Did you miss having a hands-on role in videogame development?
You do miss creating the games and collaborating with other people. You do miss that creative side but believe me, building the products for Sega was a handful!

Any Sega games that stand out for you from your time there?
The first game I really got involved with at Sega was *Enduro Racer*. I went to GE and negotiated a deal with them for their graphics program which Sega used in their coin-ops. Back then the coin-op side of the business was funding the home division. I was involved with all of their arcade games until I left in 2004. *Daytona* was a big one, and *Virtua Fighter*, of course!

What have you been up to since leaving Sega?
I did consulting for some game companies in Chicago and worked with various start-ups. For the last three years, I've been working on the Space Programme at my son's high school and we're the first in the world to have put experiments on the International Space Station. This coming May, we'll be launching our own satellite!

It sounds like you're still breaking new ground Howell! Looking back over your long career, what do you see as your biggest achievements?
Oh boy. There are a lot of little things that I can point to and say, 'I did that first'. The first cockpit videogame with *Star Fire*, which was also the first game that let you enter your initials. The first use of PROMs in a game with *Clean Sweep*. With Ramtek, I did an electronic pinball that had a microprocessor in it – a 4004 from Intel. That must have been before any other pinball used them, around 1973 or 1974, though it never went into production. I think we had three of them made as prototypes. Maybe I should have patented some of these things. You don't think of it at the time. You think, 'if I can do it, anyone can!'

Thanks to Howell's wife, Chris, for sharing the Ivy photo archive and to Martyn Carroll for additional images. Head over to www.vcs.net for more on Howell's high school space programme work.



Advance Wars

WHEN CUTE AND CARNAGE COLLIDE

RETROREVIVAL



» Game Boy Advance
» Intelligent Systems
» 2001

I've lost count of the number of hours I've lost to this amazingly addictive game. Everything about it is superbly crafted for gaming on the go, from its clever bite-sized maps to the ability to temporarily Quick Save the game at any time.

Intelligent Systems effectively swapped the fantasy setting of its popular *Fire Emblem* series for a military template, filled it with highly entertaining characters and designed some utterly fiendish levels that would fill you with elation when you finally worked out how to complete them.

The story at the heart of *Advance Wars* is a simple one, placing you in the shoes of Andy, the commanding officer of the Orange Army who is accused of starting a world war. As he defeats COs of other armies they join his cause until the true enemy is revealed… It's a delightful tale, made even more entertaining by its amusing, fleshed-out characters.

Turn-based in nature, most levels can be completed by either destroying the opposing army or capturing their base – although you'll occasionally have additional, more specific objectives to complete. There's a neat damage system which sees opposing armies dealing damage based on their hit points, while you'll eventually gain access to a large number of troops and devastating vehicles. Add in a lengthy campaign, an impressive number of additional maps to unlock and a terrific multiplayer mode and *Advance Wars* remains as fresh today as it was in 2001.




ome bases by
ocal cities.



>> Awkward deadlines mean we've only just got to cover Nintendo's interesting collection of quirky mini-games. We also take a look at the awesome Nidhogg and a selection of Sega's Mega Drive updates for 3DS



NES Remix

OLD NINTENDO GAMES AS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** WII U
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £8.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** INDIESZERO
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» Nintendo has a huge amount of classic game franchises to draw upon, so it's no surprise to see so many of them here. *Donkey Kong*, *Zelda* and *Mario* are arguably the most successful franchises, having been around since the very early Eighties.



***NES Remix* is typical of Nintendo's approach to modern gaming. While it comes up with a fun way of airing some of its classic – and not so classic – NES titles, it also badly fumbles the key thing that makes its new game so alarmingly addictive.**

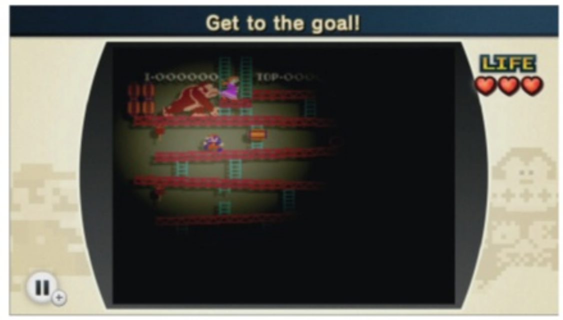
NES Remix is effectively a one-trick pony, but it's a one-trick pony with a luscious mane of hair, gorgeous fluttery eyes and a glossy coat that just begs you to ride it. Developer indieszero takes the fast-paced gameplay mechanics from its *Retro Gamer Challenge* series and marries it to the 8-bit shenanigans found in 9-Volt's *WarioWare* challenges. The end result is a highly addictive set of challenges that will test both your reflexes and patience.

16 games from Nintendo's NES catalogue have been included, from evergreen classics such as *The Legend Of Zelda*, *Excitebike*, *Super Mario Bros* and *Donkey Kong* to genuine stinkers like *Baseball* and *Urban Champion*. Each game has a large number of different challenges that all revolve around key mechanics found in the original game.

In *Excitebike* you might simply have to complete a single lap of a course, while *Donkey Kong Jr* might require you to hit two birds with available fruit. You might have to kill a certain amount of enemies while invulnerable in *Super Mario Bros*, or take out the classic bosses of *Zelda*. Each game throws constant curveballs at you, so while you might know the theme of a challenge, you won't necessarily know how best to complete it. Each challenge awards you with up to three stars (with rainbow stars given for particularly fast scores) and unlocking stars slowly unlocks games (you start off with just six) and Remixes.

The Remix stages are even more challenging and will really test your gaming skills. One infuriating early level based around *Super Mario Bros* requires you to avoid a multitude of enemies while navigating a constantly scrolling and very empty playfield, while a bout based on *Balloon Fight* requires you to take down an enormous number of enemies in a very tight timeframe.

While certain stages are insanely tough, the star-based nature means that you'll never find your progress halted. Indeed, this is one of the main strengths of *NES Remix*; you've always got a fair amount of options



» [Wii U] These lone islands are often only found by searching off the beaten track for hidden cannons.



» [Wii U] Some levels consist of several parts before culminating in a tough fight.

✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
NES Remix
It's not perfect, but I've still lost count of the number of hours I've pumped into this varied selection of mini-games.



NICK
NES Remix
A fun nostalgia trip from Nintendo that's ultimately let down by its choice of games and lack of leaderboards.

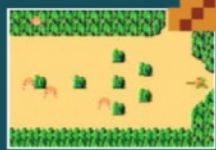




» [Wii U] The Remix stages throw in all sorts of curveballs like continually shrinking screens.

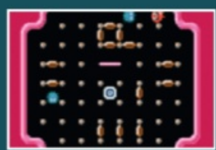
The games that inspired NES Remix

The Legend Of Zelda



An epic adventure from Nintendo that has spawned a massively successful series of games. Link's first adventure is certainly tough in places, but its dungeons and bosses are still fun to explore and defeat. Little wonder NES owners still love it.

Clu Clu Land



Clu Clu Land is an interesting variant on *Pac-Man* where your main character must travel through mazes looking for gold ingots. Interestingly, hero Bubbles can only change direction at specific turning posts, which allows for plenty of strategy.

Excitebike



A superb little racing game from Nintendo that has you balancing your bike as you tackle a selection of tough courses. There are three different modes, including solo races, racing against AI opponents and a rather excellent course editor.

Urban Champion

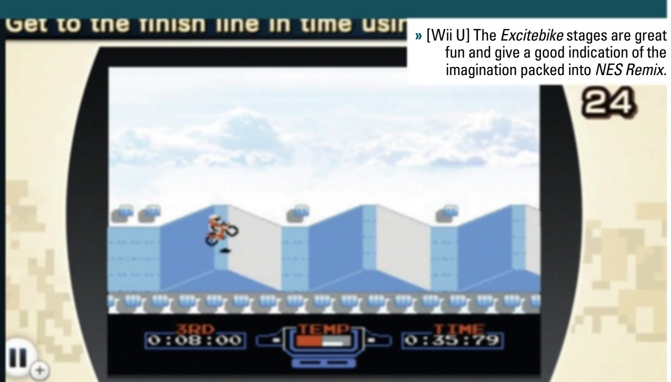


Based on an old Game & Watch title, *Urban Champion* is an exceedingly dull fighting game that has you trying to punch your opponent down manholes. It's as exciting as it sounds, and, strangely enough, doesn't translate well to *NES Remix.*

Donkey Kong



Okay so it's missing a level from the original arcade game, but this remains an extremely solid arcade conversion and was an essential part of any NES Collection. Both NES sequels are included in *NES Remix*, but the original remains our favourite.



» [Wii U] The *Excitebike* stages are great fun and give a good indication of the imagination packed into *NES Remix.*

✱WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
WARIO WARE INC: MINIGAME MANIA (GBA)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
RETRO GAME CHALLENGE (DS)



available to you as completing a challenge immediately unlocks the next in line. The pacing of the unlockable games is quite sensible as well, meaning it never feels like a grind while you're unlocking stuff. It's something of a pity then that many of the later games you unlock aren't as good as the ones found at the beginning. While we're perfectly happy with the amount of games on offer, it does seem a shame that many of the later games genuinely weren't that fun to play in their original forms and while Nintendo and indieszero should be commended for what has been wrung out of them, they don't feel quite as enjoyable as a lot of the earlier games or Remixes.

The biggest issues with *NES Remix* though are by far the most baffling ones. Considering the family-based tag that has been attached to Nintendo's console there's no multiplayer on offer at all. When you consider the sheer competiveness that *NES Remix* actually offers it feels like a colossal oversight. Granted you can simply pass the pad between friends as you all attempt to beat a score, but it doesn't really work in the same way. And then there's the fact that Nintendo has created a high score-based game with no online leaderboard. Admittedly you can kind of post scores on MiiVerse, but it's a flaky system that doesn't work too well. Aside from unlocking all the games, there's very little incentive to try and best your actual scores, which takes away a huge part of *NES Remix*'s appeal.

It's a real shame that Nintendo drops the ball so spectacularly here and it just feels completely out of touch in today's gaming environment. Maybe Nintendo had no faith that *NES Remix* would have any appeal to anyone but the biggest retro heads (after all it was released with virtually no fanfare at all) which may explain why the overall concept feels a little half-baked.

Get past the lack of leaderboards and the batch of later weak games and you'll still find plenty to enjoy in *NES Remix.* The games themselves look excellent, effortlessly capturing the spirit of the original releases, while the sheer amount

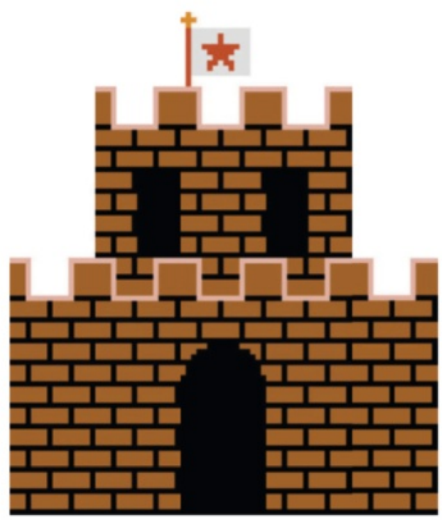


of variety packed into the large number of challenges should be commended. We'd love to see Nintendo adopt this approach with other consoles in its back catalogue – you don't know what we'd do to get a SNES Remix – but we're more than happy with the delightful surprise that it has served up for everyone.

In a nutshell

It's let down by the lack of a decent leaderboard system and being based on some bland games, but *NES Remix* remains a fun take on the mini-game formula. Hopefully expansions and sequels will iron out all the niggles in this nevertheless fun debut.

>> Score **70%**



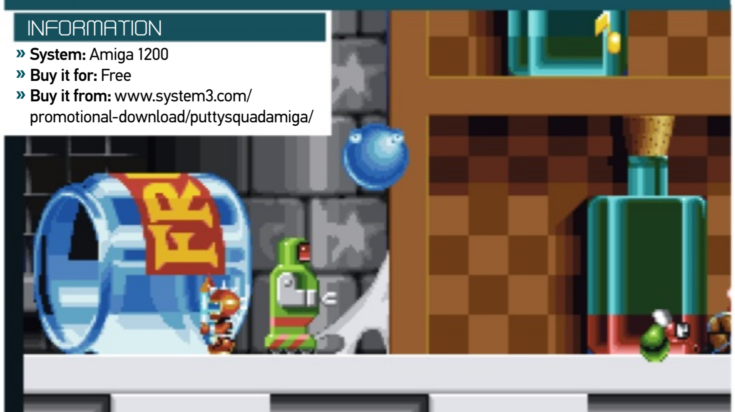
RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download



DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH

INFORMATION
» **System:** Amiga 1200
» **Buy it for:** Free
» **Buy it from:** www.system3.com/promotional-download/puttysquadamiga/



Putty Squad

It's not every day you get to review an Amiga game that's gone missing in action for 19 years, so it made perfect sense to write a review.

Originally planned for the Amiga 1200, *Putty Squad* was one of the few games actually designed to take advantage of the machine. As a result John Twiddy's game brims with confidence, featuring extremely well detailed levels, huge environments and beautiful animation. Putty himself is the star of the show, having access to a variety of abilities that range from punching enemies to expanding in size and stretching (perfect for fast movement or reaching out of the way areas). He can also form into a puddle and absorb items. This last ability is incredibly useful as you'll need to suck up a set number of stranded putties before you can progress to the next level. Once collected an exit will open allowing you access to the next stage.

It's here that *Putty Squad*'s age becomes apparent. There's no real signposting as such, which some will find frustrating. It's old-school game design and we'd expect nothing else. Besides, it's refreshing having to explore every last nook and cranny of a stage. The exploring presents another bonus, as there's a huge number of levels – 35 in fact – packed into this two disk download, with an additional 19 sub-levels to discover.

The biggest issue with *Putty Squad* though is its control system. Unlike the SNES version, all of Putty's abilities are mapped to a single button that does make things trickier than they need to be. They're done as well as can be expected, but there's no denying that it's an issue. The controls themselves are nice and tight, but when things heat up you'll occasionally make mistakes.

Putty Squad's later levels also suffer as they can get amazingly tough. You stick with it though, because the core gameplay is so much fun. *Putty Squad* has aged, but it remains a highly entertaining platformer.

80%

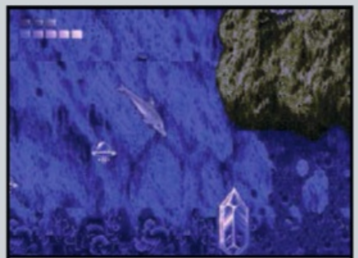
>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed

» **System:** iOS (tested), Android
» **Buy it for:** £2.99 (additional IAP)
» **Buy it from:** App Store, Google Play
» Play this on anything but the latest device and you're in for much frustration. Our iPad 3 is hardly old, but *Transformed*'s frame rate was alarming at times, lurching about all over the place, particularly when things heated up on-screen. Performance is better on newer devices, but the annoying pay-wall, which becomes more intrusive the further you get, takes the shine off a competent racer.

61%



3D Ecco The Dolphin

» **System:** 3DS
» **Buy it for:** £4.09
» **Buy it from:** Nintendo eShop (3DS)
» *Ecco* is another game that really benefits from its new 3D makeover, with the effect really bringing the 16-bit underwater adventure to life. M2 has created lots of interesting options, including a new difficulty mode (that unfortunately makes the game a little too simplistic) and it's even possible to access the original Japanese version. It remains an entertaining adventure, with truly fantastic sound design, that's only really let down by its hard to navigate level design.

73%



Dr Luigi

» **System:** Wii U
» **Buy it for:** £13.49
» **Buy it from:** Nintendo eShop
» *Dr Mario* always felt like a poor alternative to *Tetris*, and the introduction of new L-shaped blocks, along with a far too easy touch-screen mode, does little to improve the original formula. It's pleasing to see Nintendo offer a solid online mode that adds a good layer of competitiveness and longevity to its germ-matching puzzle game, but this is otherwise tame stuff with little to recommend over past iterations of the game. Not what the doctor ordered we're afraid.

56%



3D Shinobi III: Return Of The Ninja Master

» **System:** 3DS
» **Buy it for:** £4.09
» **Buy it from:** Nintendo eShop (3DS)
» Another Mega Drive gem gets the 3D makeover treatment. Unlike *Ecco*, *The Ninja Master* really stands the test of time, offering lots of variety, a stiff, but never unfair challenge and plenty of tense boss encounters. Emulation is excellent with a raft of neat options ranging from emulating a CRT screen to an all-new 'Expert' difficulty mode. The 3D effect is also superb, enhancing an already impressive remake.

88%

Nidhogg

» **System:** PC » **Buy it for:** £11.99 » **Buy it from:** Steam

Few multiplayer games are as well refined or as deceptively deep as this beauty from developer Messhof. Playing a fencer you're thrown into a deadly arena where you must face-off against a fellow combatant, desperately trying to reach your endzone so that you can be sacrificed to a giant worm. No really, we're not joking. At first no one has priority, but as soon as the first kill is made, *Nidhogg* becomes a deadly game of tug-of-war as you try to constantly out-fence, or simply outrun your opponent. *Nidhogg* works thanks to its superb control system that allows you to do everything from parrying and disarming your opponent, to even chucking your sword at them. The controls are exceptionally tight, while the constant seesawing makes for some amazingly satisfying battles.

While the single-player (a gauntlet of AI opponents) is superb fun, it's the insanely addictive local multiplayer mode (online is a bit hit and miss with far too many disconnects) that will keep you playing and playing. An essential multiplayer game that will provide endless hours of fun.

91%




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HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews



It's truly amazing to see former programmers return to their roots. David Jones, author of the Magic Knight series on the Spectrum, is currently pulling apart and rewriting bits of the first game in the series, Finders Keepers, to add new rooms and generally see how much more can be crammed into a 48k machine. The discussion over on the World Of Spectrum forums can be found behind kikstart.eu/finders-wos





FORMAT: RASPBERRY PI
DEVELOPER: FUZE
LINK: FUZE.CO.UK
RELEASE: 2013
PRICE: £179.99

FUZE

LIGHT THE TOUCH PAPER AND RETIRE TO A SAFE DISTANCE

The Raspberry Pi is, as at least some readers will probably already be aware, a computer with a circuit board around the size of a credit card which boots its Linux-based operating system from SD cards. The Pi was originally aimed at classrooms to help with the teaching of programming but has, due to the low cost, very good power consumption and being very small, become extremely popular for all manner of tasks including driving home automation or taking photos nearly from space. The FUZE project takes that little circuit board, wraps it up in a robust metal case with integrated keyboard and adds a breadboard for electronics prototyping before feeding it with a specially adapted release of the Raspbian operating system which includes an interpreted BASIC programming language called FUZE BASIC.

> "The friendly BASIC is all about making programming fun again"

This dialect of BASIC is pretty solid and has features like procedures similar to BBC BASIC, but there are some quirks; for example anybody previously familiar with FOR/NEXT loops will find they won't work without an additional CYCLE at the end of the first command in the pair. And, since FUZE BASIC is interpreted like the 8-bit BASICs of old, the speed does leave a little to be desired so, while many fun retro-styled games like *Pac-Man* or *Galaga* are certainly possible, the interpreter might struggle under load when it's confronted with something more intense.

Programs can be entered either with the built-in text editor or using the traditional line-numbered method that many readers will be doubtless be familiar with from their childhood and, with that in mind, when testing the FUZE we wrote a small *Light Cycles*-style game and entered the bulk of the listing with line numbers to see how it felt. There are a few issues in this mode – there doesn't seem to be a way to halt the listing as it scrolls past or list a specific range of line numbers, although these issues may be dealt with in a future revision – but there's a useful renumber command and the interpreter flags errors as each line is entered.



» [FUZE] 10 PRINT "RG IS SKILL"

So it isn't the most powerful machine and won't directly make would-be programmers into the next big indie gaming superstar, but the friendly BASIC is all about making programming fun again like it was for home computer users in the Seventies and Eighties. Existing Raspberry Pi owners can download the image of Raspbian with FUZE BASIC from the project's website to try writing their own code before making a purchase and parents wanting to introduce their children to the joys of BASIC programming – something that the government is currently adding to the national curriculum for 2014 – or indeed electronics can do so with the knowledge that the FUZE is built robustly with those situations in mind; the demonstration we were given at Play last October included banging the machine against a table! If you've ever wanted to dabble in home coding, this is a great place to start.



» [FUZE] Badger, badger.

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

SGT HELMET ZERO

» FORMAT: COMMODORE PLUS/4 **» DEVELOPER:** KICHY **» DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/HELMET-ZERO-264 **» PRICE:** FREE

The land of Khartadmocia has been torn apart by a war between two landowners which was brought to an abrupt end by a couple of fatal 'accidents' involving banana skins. The people celebrate before putting a tyrant-free government in charge, but there are still prisoners of war out in no man's land, held captive by a combination of automated guns and creatures summoned by dark magic.

Sgt Helmet is the man brought in to liberate these poor souls and will have to march through a series of levels to save the damsels in distress while shooting or manoeuvring around the supernatural enemies and defence systems. Most players will probably need to acclimatise to the chunky movement of the sergeant and his foes a little, but once that's done *Sgt Helmet Zero* offers some entertaining and quite challenging platform-based shooting along with reasonable graphics and a good amount of colour throughout.

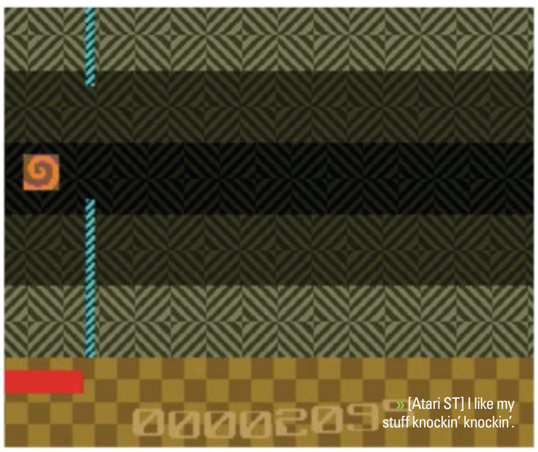
87%

» [Plus/4] Quick march!



UNCONTROLLED

» FORMAT: ATARI ST **» DEVELOPER:** MASTERS OF ELECTRIC CITY **» DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/UNCONTROLLED-ST **» PRICE:** FREE



» [Atari ST] I like my stuff knockin' knockin'.

***Uncontrolled* is a** small one-button game for the Atari ST where a regularly changing avatar has to be guided safely through a constantly scrolling level by well-timed presses of the space bar. But, unlike other one button games such as *Canabalt* or *The Impossible Game*, it doesn't merely react when the space bar is pressed; holding the key down will charge a power meter that appears on-screen and releasing it launches the player's object with the appropriate force.

This gives the game a different feel to those other one-button titles, but it's also less accessible since avoiding contact with the moving barriers in particular is remarkably hard and, although collisions sap energy rather than killing outright, surviving for any extended period is just as much down to luck as it is judgement. That's something of a shame too, because the smooth scrolling and sprite movement are well done but can't make up for the annoying gameplay.

61%

LAMB CHOPS

» FORMAT: APPLE II **» DEVELOPER:** BRIAN PICCHI **» DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/LAMB-CHOPS-A2 **» PRICE:** $22.50 WITH SHIPPING

Shepherds have a difficult job, and the shepherd at the heart of *Lamb Chops* really has his work cut out after his sheep escape. Armed only with a shotgun he must stop wolves from nabbing sheep as they wend their way home while keeping a wary eye out for the yetis and aliens who fancy a human-flavoured snack and won't think twice about mutilating a sheep on the way past. The shepherd dies upon touching anything moving apart from the sheep and, if three of those buy the farm, he'll lose a life.

Lamb Chops is a simple game but effective as well, being very easy to pick up but difficult to actually master. Aiming the shotgun effectively is the first skill required, but to really succeed the player will need to work out a good technique for dealing with the threat of a yeti or alien which doesn't put the poor sheep in danger.

80%



» [Apple II] Feeling a little sheepish.

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Spectrum] Going up.

» One small step

Horace To The Rescue was a Spectrum game planned as part of the *Horace* series, promoted in magazines but never released. Programmer Steve Broad has decided to create his own version based on previous instalments and what little is known about this lost Psion game. We've parked a link to the World Of Spectrum forum thread behind kikstart.eu/horace-rescue-spec which has more information.



» [Plus/4] Why did the frog cross the road?

» Oy, hop it!

Jens Engel was the author of fun C16 game *Pilot X* back in the Eighties and released 16k and 64k versions of *The Frog* for the C16 and Plus/4 respectively in 2012, but it was only widely announced recently. It shouldn't be a surprise that that this is a *Frogger* clone, so expect to guide the titular amphibian across a road before hopping over a river using the logs. kikstart.eu/frog-264



» [VIC-20] Hanging around in the hangar.

» Meet your Doom!

It's been mentioned previously in **Retro Gamer** and the release happened just a little too late to be reviewed this issue, but Kweepa's long-awaited conversion of *Doom* to the VIC-20 is now out in the wild. And for those who weren't previously aware, yes we really did say *Doom*, because it's a rendition of the seminal FPS crammed into a RAM-expanded machine. kikstart.eu/doom-vic heads towards a chunky-pixeled download.

HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

>> LOOKS BETTER THAN IT TASTES

The name Speccy Jam is misleading on two counts; it's not about boiling Eighties computers with sugar to preserve them and, more importantly, the games developed for it aren't actually going to run on an actual Spectrum! Instead these are Spectrum-skinned games for Windows and web browsers so expect lots of pretend colour clash and beeper sounds. There were over 20 entries in the first Speccy Jam; downloads are available from kikstart.eu/speccy-jam and we're hoping that some might end up converted to the machine.



>> MMM, CRUNCHY PLASTIC

Continuing the jam theme is the second Game Boy Jam and the premise is the same as the Spectrum one we've already looked at; developers produce games for current generation machines that emulate a classic system, in this case Nintendo's original Game Boy. kikstart.eu/gameboy-jam-2 goes to the official forum where all of the releases can be downloaded.



FLASH BOREDOM

Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we take a look at **Traffic Frenzy**.

TAKE CONTROL OF TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT A SERIES OF CROSSROADS IN A BUSY TOWN AND RELEASE THE CARS WHEN IT'S SAFE TO CROSS. IT MIGHT SOUND SIMPLE, BUT WHEN THERE'S MORE THAN ONE SET OF LIGHTS TO MANAGE YOU'LL NEED THE SPEED CHANGE POWER-UPS OR AN AIR STRIKE!
KIKSTART.EU/TRAFFIC-FRENZY-FLASH

MORE GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...

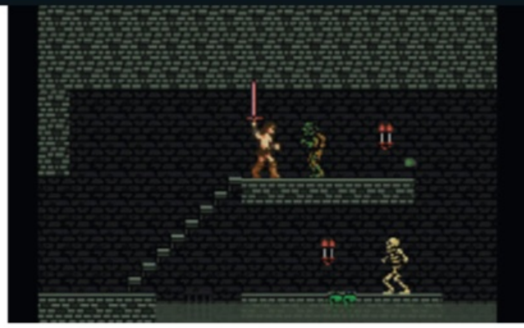


ROFAXAN 2089 AD

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/ROFAXAN-XBLIG

2089 AD is, according to this Xbox Live indie game, going to be very violent time. But our hero, armed with a one-person fighter able to take a couple of hits from enemies and collect dropped power-ups, is going to do something about that by… blowing even more things up to loud music?

The battles of this war take place in a series of horizontally-scrolling areas populated by trigger-happy aliens. Things start getting difficult around the third or fourth level, but for seasoned players there's the OMG Hardcore Mode which dials most of the enemies' firing up to 11 or Boss Rush which does away with the levels entirely to throw the end-of-level ships at the player one after another.

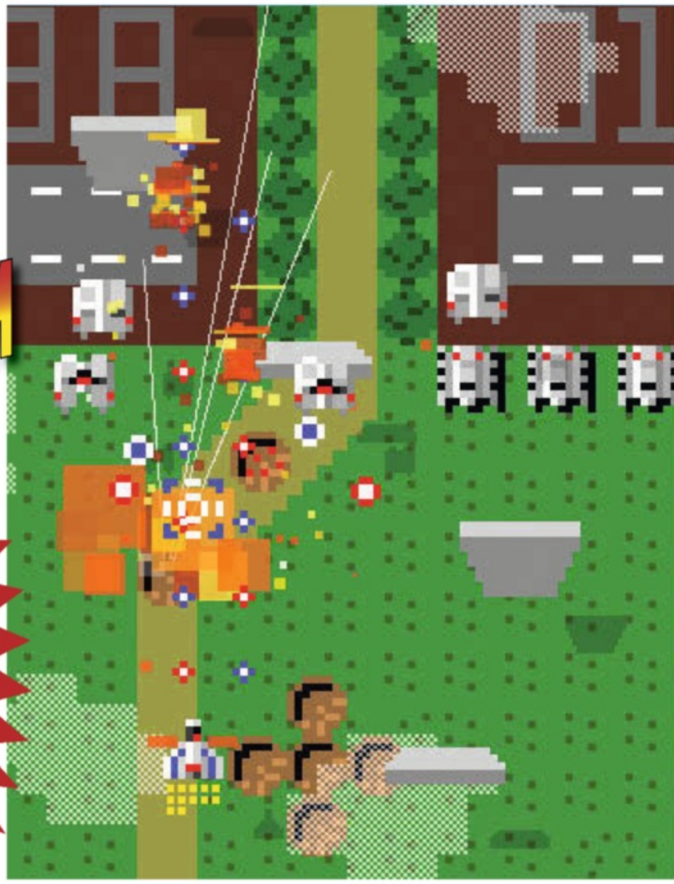


BARBARIANS AND THE NECROMANCER'S TOWER

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BARBARIANS-WIN

Raawwwrr the Barbarian has stumbled upon the stronghold of a necromancer who has amassed a particularly large fortune and – since he despises mages of any kind but loves money – has decided to liberate one from the other. But the tower is inhabited by undead creatures, so grabbing all of that loot is also going to require some skill with a sword.

The controls are sometimes fiddly and the enemies have apparently been placed to cause maximum frustration, but *Barbarians* should prove a reasonable, platformer for any players who have a high annoyance threshold.



TINY XEVIVOS

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/XEVIVOS-WIN

For those who haven't played the original *Xevious*, the player's Solvalou spacecraft flies over a vertically-scrolling landscape and must destroy or avoid the enemies and their bullets. The craft has a forward-firing Zapper for aerial enemies and can smash ground-based tanks and bases with the bomb-like Blaster.

Tiny Xevivos takes most of the elements from the seminal coin-op and reworks them, offering graphics that are similar to the original but redrawn in a lower resolution with a brighter colour palette. There are also significantly more air-based enemies attacking than in the original, as well as heavier pyrotechnics.

The developer of this game appears to be a fan of *Xevious* to the point where he's written it as something of a love letter, so – although the action is significantly more busy than the original and the explosion effects more intense – the attention to detail means that other devotees of the original should at least find things eerily familiar during play.



» [Plus/4] By the garden of the willow tree.





» [Plus/4] I think we're in trouble.



» [Plus/4] Dick goes north from the kitchen.

HOMEBREW HEROES

RÓBERT KISNÉMETH IS THE AUTHOR OF PLUS/4 RUN-AND-GUN GAME SGT HELMET ZERO; A DEBRIEFING ABOUT THE PROCESSES BEHIND CONVERTING A SPECTRUM GAME TO COMMODORE'S 121 COLOUR MACHINE SEEMED APPROPRIATE

Q&A

What brought *Sgt Helmet Zero* to your attention as a candidate for converting the game?

I've read the Mojon Twins' blog for several years. I look for different challenges each time when I decide what to develop next. I'd already made a game for the C16 (16k RAM), sometimes I develop in pure assembly and this time I found *Sgt Helmet Zero* as a challenge. It has C source code and my last shoot-'em-up was 21 years ago. I decided to prototype this game in pure C and implement the most time critical parts in assembly.

Do you find it easier to convert an existing game or start from scratch?

Converting is easier than developing from scratch. You don't need to design the various aspects of the game: game mechanics, scenes, maps and graphics; they are all given. If you have the original source code it really can speed up the development.

What if anything was changed between the original and your conversion?

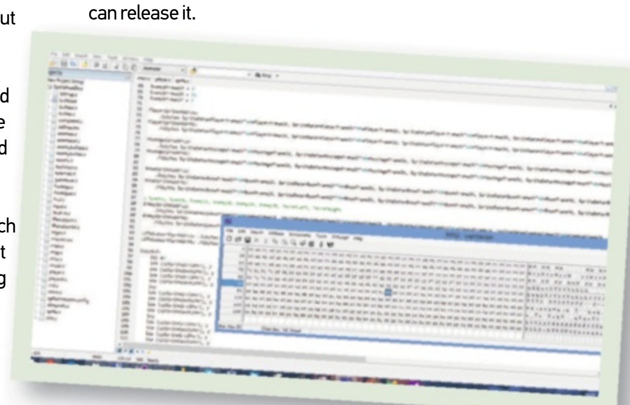
I tried to improve the graphics utilising the multicolour mode of the Commodore Plus/4 and the enhanced palette. The game also runs faster on the Plus/4. I also modified some elements of the game mechanics: how much the baddies hurt you, how often a life support box drops, how the energy display on the status bar starts blinking when it gets dangerously low. The original sources contain an unused face animation (like in *Doom*) which I put back into the game. The music was completely recomposed by Csaba Pankaczy because the Plus/4 has only two simple sound channels.

Were there any stand out moments during *Sgt Helmet Zero*'s development?

There weren't any really outstanding moments but lots of smaller ones. When I finally drew a really stylish soldier I liked after lots of trial and error. That moment when the soldier starts running and jumping after you've coded for several hours. One time I asked Luca Carrafiello to draw an animated Miss Universe girl tied to a pole for me – the hostages you have to save in the game). It was a carefully hand-drawn pixel girl and realistic in such a low amount of pixels but I didn't use it because it just simply didn't fit in with the style of the existing cartoonish/childish graphics.

And finally, can you tell us what you're working on next?

I've been working on the second part of *Adventures In Time* since 2011. I have released a preview as well: kikstart.eu/ait2-prv-264. Sometimes I achieve greater milestones just in a few days and then I don't touch the sources for weeks. In those weeks I do something new like *Sgt Helmet Zero* or draw graphics for other games like *Memento*: kikstart.eu/memento-264. In the last few weeks I've worked on another conversion, this time a Commodore 64 game and it will be an exact conversion (except the sounds but Csaba brought out the best from the Plus/4). It is already finished, [it just] needs some more testing and I can release it.



» [Plus/4] Source code and hex editing.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

WIN!

This month's Star Letter prize is a cool Mega Drive Classic Game Console, courtesy of **www.funstock.co.uk**



STAR LETTER

A VERY RETRO CHRISTMAS

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
I'm almost 41. Last year was a bit rubbish for my family. I won't go into detail but suffice to say it was tough and emotional all round. So I made myself a promise, I was going to try and relive my childhood Christmases and set up a selection of my old hardware in my living room to recreate what my brothers and I saw as a Christmas treat. Instead of blazing away on our Spectrum/C128/Amiga in our bedroom, our gaming would take place on the enormous family telly in the front room.

Conveniently, my kids had moved their Xboxes to their bedrooms, allowing my indulgence. It wasn't exactly as it was when I was a kid – as brothers we are scattered across the British Isles, and one of us has passed away – plus I set up three consoles I didn't have when I was growing up, but I played *some* of the games I would have during those times. I dusted off my Mega Drive, my Jaguar and my Atari 7800 and played *Tempest 2000*, *Defender 2000*, *Gunstar Heroes*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Demon Attack*, *Gynoug* and, best of all, a marathon *Speedball 2* session.



» [Mega-CD] A *Speedball 2* session sounds like a pretty good Christmas to us, particularly if you have family around to smash.

Arguably, being the age I am and owning my house, I should be able to play old videogames anywhere I want, but I dunno, this was special. My wife didn't bat an eyelid, and it was fab.

I have no idea why I am sharing this with you. Maudlin? Sentimental? But it took me back 25 years, when I played until the wee hours, with all the lights off and the volume turned low not to wake Mum.
All the best,
Luke Williams

Reading this letter produced powerful nostalgic memories of sitting around the TV at Christmas, introducing the family to *Micro Machines '96*. Have a prize.

I SPY SLY SPY

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
My name is David, I'm from Santander, Spain. I'd like to remind you of the really good *Sly Spy* conversion to the Amstrad CPC. Although it has no sound, the graphics, spirit and gameplay are nearly identical to the arcade game, especially the submarine stages which are just so delicious to play – astonishing for the CPC. For me it's one of the best arcade conversions to the CPC for sure, although *Sly Spy* was not my favourite arcade game. I think you should give a little coverage of this game that perhaps didn't receive the acclaim of other arcade games, but is still a great game.
Regards,
David



» [Amstrad CPC] Software Creations' conversion of *Sly Spy* took great advantage of the CPC's signature colourful graphics.

You're certainly right about *Sly Spy* – it's not the best arcade game, but the Amstrad conversion is really rather good. We'll see if we can get in touch with the programmer and cover it in a future issue.

DREAMING OF THE MEGA-CD

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
Big fan of your mag and I really love when you do pieces about collecting for certain systems, so I was wondering if your esteemed pages could make space for the Dreamcast or Sega Mega-CD? The Dreamcast had a killer library with most of the games being very good. Also with the release of the PS4 and Xbox One, the Dreamcast can now be considered a Retro console. And while the Mega-CD was not Sega's finest hour, the system had some really quality stuff like *Sonic CD*, *Final Fight CD* and *Shining Force CD* and *Snatcher*!
Daniel Tremlett

Thanks for the letter Daniel. Rest assured that we haven't forgotten about either machine – they've simply been covered a little more recently in Retro Gamer's history than the Sega machines that we have done Collector's Guides for. We featured the Dreamcast on the cover of issue 50, while the Mega-CD was covered in issue 61. Readers interested in reading those articles can pick up digital copies of the issues at www.greatdigitalmags.com.

» [Mega-CD] *Adventures Of Batman And Robin* isn't just a graphical showcase – it's one of the rarest games on the system.



THE FUTURE OF BAK

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
Being a **RG** reader since way back in issue one and a subscriber for quite sometime now – I've actually forgotten how long! – I've always found something of interest in all issues of **RG** and some issues I've even read cover to cover.

Being – like many spotty teenagers back in the day – an amateur programmer, I've always favoured the discussions you have with developers back then especially if they were coding on the Speccy and later the Atari ST.

This is why two issues back you brought back memories of a particular programmer: Steve Bak. You mentioned two of his more famous games, *Return To Genesis* and *Star Ray* and both were famous for fast horizontal scrolling on the ST – something hitherto unheard of. I remember he did an interview with *Amiga Format* around 1990 expressing his desire to retire and just wondered, what has happened to Steve Bak?

As to the ongoing argument about what is retro and what isn't: you may not think the PS2 or Xbox are retro, but remember the ten year-old kids who got their brand-new Xboxes for Christmas are now 20-somethings, many with wives and children, and some are graduates with executive jobs. We may think of the Spectrum as retro but by comparison it is more like a dinosaur and we're the grandparents. Anyway, keep up the good work.
Chris Teague

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag



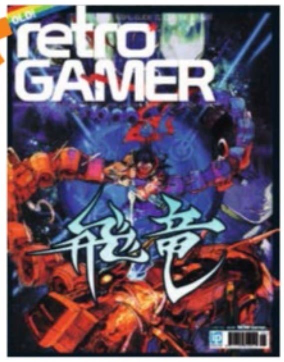
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THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY. . .

Darran discusses the covers that didn't quite make it





STRIDER

We were planning a cool Japanese design for our *Strider* cover to highlight the art used in the PlayStation port of *Strider 2*. Unfortunately, a delay in our answers from *Strider's* original creator Kouichi Yotsui meant we had to push our plans back for another month.

MOVIE MASTERPIECES

This was proving very tricky to pull off. We liked the idea of using *RoboCop* as the game features inside, but it was very hard to make it look anything other than a *RoboCop* cover. The other images were also distracting.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

NowGamer Retro Stream



Our NowGamer colleagues are looking to stream Mega Drive gameplay online, so the Retro Gamer team is naturally interested. Nick's providing a multi-tap and *NBA Jam*, Steve wants to see *Aladdin* and Darran is mocking them for buying *Primal Rage*. As for Jon, he'd rather they hooked up a SNES.

We did some investigation and it appears that Steve Bak didn't follow through on his plan to retire. He went on to work on the *James Pond* series before joining Eurocom in the mid-Nineties. We'll do some more investigating.

CRIME FINDER

Dear **Retro Gamer,**

I was really hoping you could help me out. I used to play a game in the arcades with my friend and am trying to rediscover it so I can hopefully buy it on a retro compilation. It was a scrolling fighter and two people could play it. I remember it having a lot of humour, so billboards would drop on players and squash them. It had a gritty urban theme and I remember that the fighters would twirl knives when they picked them up. The sprites were quite small, but this allowed for there to be a lot of them on-screen. I think it was by Capcom, but I'm not too sure about this. It's definitely not *Final Fight*. Any help you can give me will be greatly appreciated.

David Jenkins

Hi David, after a little digging we think we've found the game you're looking for: *Crime Fighters*, a 1988 release by Konami. Problem solved!



» [Arcade] It's easy to see how Paul mistook Konami's *Crime Fighters* for Capcom's work – both were masters of the genre.



From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

Your favourite movie licence?

Lost Dragon
Easily *Platoon* on C64. Proved once and for all you didn't have to turn a film based around war into a game which was little more than a *Commando* clone, but by following events from the film closely, you could produce stunning results.

Mayhem
I will plump for *Navy SEALs* on the C64. Not only a terrific game that requires forethought and skill (one hit deaths!), but managed to make an excellent effort in the game that the film sorely lacks.

ArchaicKoala
Got to be *GoldenEye 007* on the N64. An amazing single-player game with a very fun multiplayer mode. *GoldenEye* really is to thank (or blame?) for console FPS multiplayer becoming as big as it is today.

Hiro
Batman: The Movie, especially on the Amiga. A superb combination of genres that perfectly follows the movie. And the Batmobile and Batwing sections were fantastic. I often come back to it and it still plays brilliantly.

Mancman
Blade Runner! Loved Westwood's adaption of this. Great film, great game.

sscott
RoboCop on Atari ST for me, maybe not the very best conversion and took me ages to work out how to beat ED 209 but have fond memories! A good amount of variety also.

pdanddiet
Cobra. ZX Spectrum. Joffa Smiff. Game Under.

flatapex
Bram Stoker's *Dracula* for the Master System. It arrived late in the console's life and unusually for a film licence everything was done right, the graphics were great, controls were spot on and the sound was really well done.

samhain81
I have a soft spot for all *Jurassic Park* games, but nothing beats creating and managing your own dinosaur park in *Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis*.

darthsteve333
Star Wars by Atari – no other game has made me feel like I was actually in the movie. Amazing what a bit of good gameplay, a few decent movie samples and a bit of imagination can do!

commanderkaiser
For me it's easily *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, my first PlayStation 2 game and it was truly fantastic.

retro GAMER

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30 Years of Knight Lore

As Ultimate's classic game turns 30, we speak to the many developers it influenced and how it helped change isometric gaming forever

Also featured:



Strider
■ As the third part of Capcom's trilogy is released, we speak to the developers behind the series.



Pete Cook
■ The man behind such epics as *Tau Ceti* comes out of hiding to talk about the good old days.

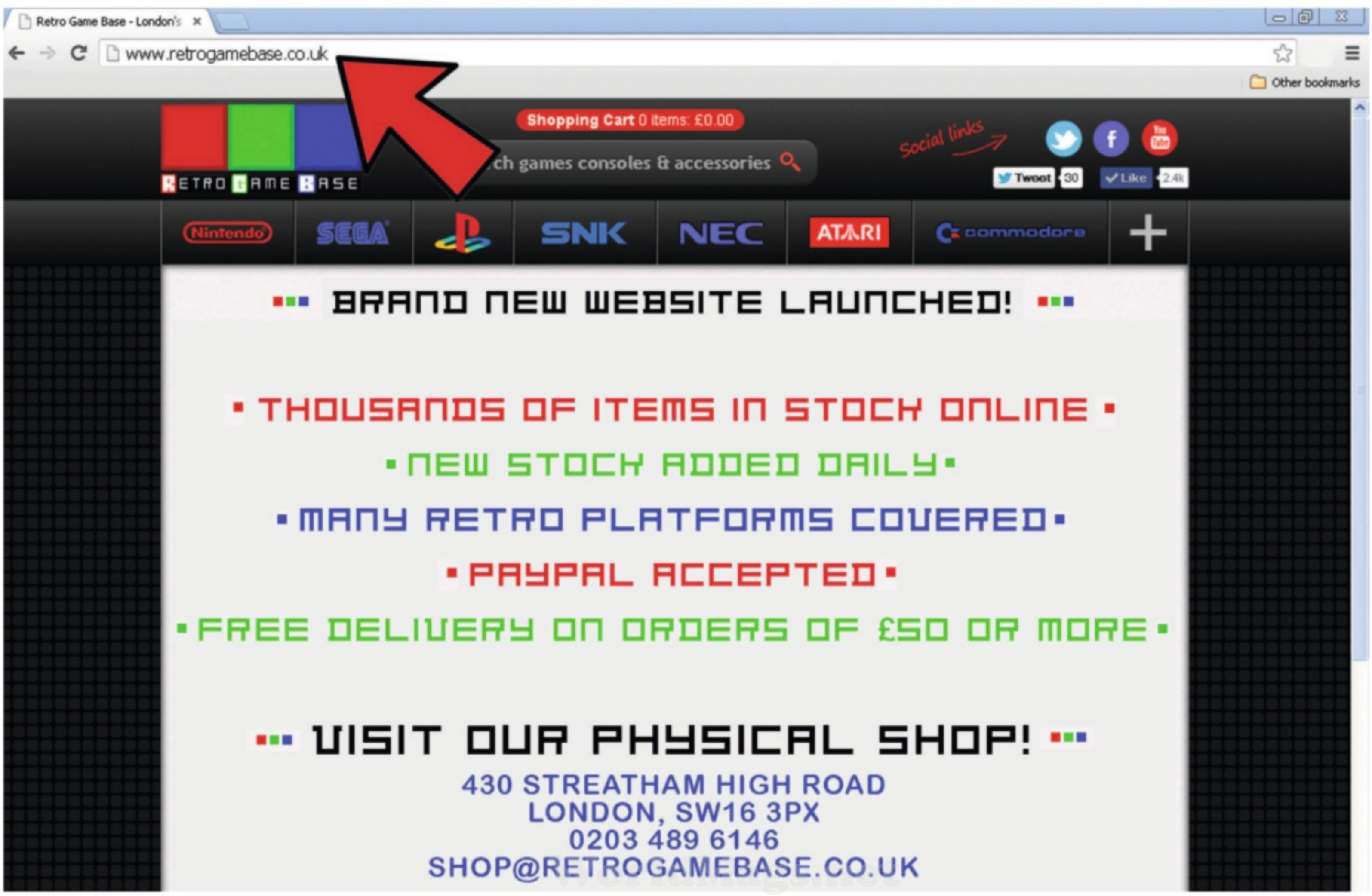


Ballblazer
■ It was the game that launched LucasArts into the big leagues. Find out how it all happened.



WonderSwan
■ As the WonderSwan turns 15, we take a retrospective look back at the short-lived handheld range.


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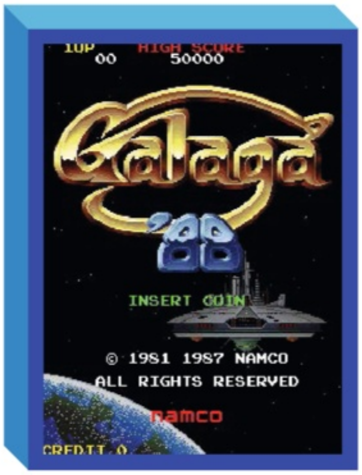

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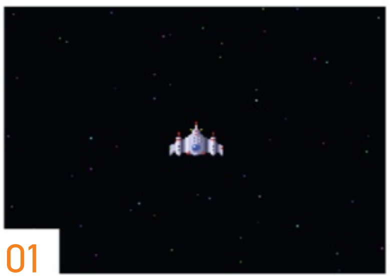

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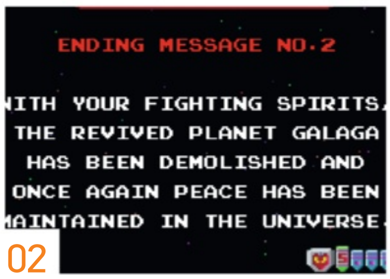
GALAGA '88

» Having already released three entries in the Galaxian series and nearing the tenth anniversary of the original, Namco had to do a lot of work to improve on the classic shooting formula. Thankfully, it managed to do so and the result was a gripping new assault on the Galaga forces. After 29 stages over eight worlds, you might expect some praise. Instead, our pilot was working towards this…



01

» Having beaten the final boss, your pilot is on the long journey home. There's no service station for four light-years and he's seen a lot of terrible things, but he managed to defend his home planet from the alien threat.



02

» Your pilot didn't just secure a ceasefire, either. He destroyed Galaga, the home planet of the marauding aliens, guaranteeing peace for the future. His mind turns to the medals and fame which surely await him on his return home.



03

» The pilot's dreams of talk show deals and product endorsements are soon interrupted by a message warning him that reality is not all it seems. Hoping he hasn't accidentally slipped into a *Metal Gear* game, he listens intently.



04

» An image of a tearful, wounded alien appears on the monitor. Our protagonist reels in horror as the words of his enemy crackle through the speaker. This youngster, a private, was defending his home planet from great danger. He's stranded on a ruined planet now, thanks to your actions.



05

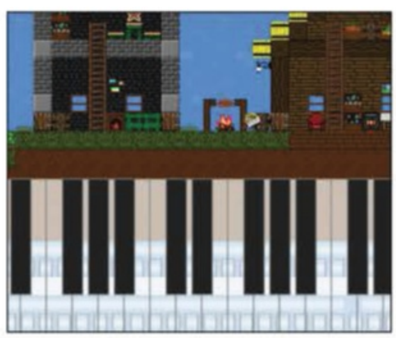
» The truth dawns on the pilot. He was an aggressor, an agent of destruction. The terror he brought to Galaga will be celebrated back home as heroism, but he no longer believes the propaganda. While it's the end of the game, our pilot's quest for redemption has just begun…

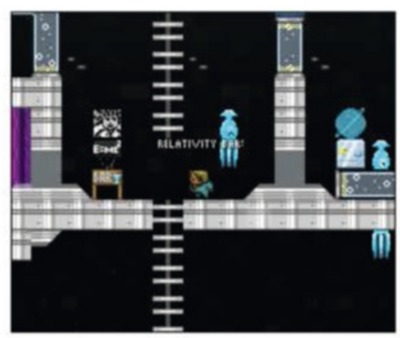
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